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ON
THE EVILS
WHICH THE
ESTABLISHED CHURCH
IN EDINBURGH
HAS
ALREADY SUFFERED, AND SUFFERS STILL,
IN VIRTUE OF
THE SEAT-LETTING
BEING IN
THE HANDS OF THE MAGISTRATES;
WITH REMARKS
ON THE UNJUST AND INJURIOUS TENDENCY OF A LATE
DOCUMENT, PUBLISHED BY THEIR AUTHORITY, ON
THE SUBJECT OF THE UNLET SITTINGS.

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SECOND EDITION.

JOHN ANDERSON, JUN., EDINBURGH,
55, NORTH BRIDGE STREET.
MDCCCXXXV.

THE CITY

ESTABLISHED CHURCH

IN LONDON

AND OF THE PARISH OF ST. MARTIN

IN THE DISTRICT OF ST. MARTIN

OF THE PARISH OF ST. MARTIN

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PREFACE.

IN the ungracious task of finding fault, it were certainly desirable that the mildest and most conciliating terms should be employed,—so, however, as to be consistent with truth ; and so, too, as not to endanger the attainment of the reformation which is sought for. Were the thing complained of a personal or private injustice, the principle of forbearance might be carried indefinitely far,—even, perhaps, to the length of absolute non-resistance. But it is widely different in the case of a great public mischief; some violence, for example, done to that highest of all interests, the moral interest of the community,—when either to repress one's sense of the wrong, or to mitigate his expression of it, might be tantamount to the surrender of a great patriotic cause.

Still, controversy, at the very best, is a disagreeable thing, even in the absence, as now, of all ill-will individually to those against whom the remonstrance is lifted, or with whom the reckoning is held. At the same time it is felt to be no small consolation, that, while in the following pages there is "nothing extenuate," neither is there "aught set down in malice."

ON
THE EVILS
DONE TO THE
ESTABLISHED CHURCH
IN EDINBURGH

BY THE SEAT-LETTING BEING IN THE
HANDS OF THE MAGISTRATES.

1. IN this age of hasty, but withal of confident opinions, it is extremely difficult to strike the precise adjustment between too much and too little explanation, so as to avoid the danger on the one hand of being so long as not to be read, and on the other of being so short as not to be understood. The phenomenon of unlet seats in our old churches is again brought forward in opposition to the building of new churches. We attempted last summer, by a series of communications in the Scottish Guardian newspaper, to expose the fallacy of that argument; but at such length, that though we might reassemble and republish these in the form of a pamphlet, we despair of being perused by those who are now the most determined and clamorous in their resistance to our object. We afterwards thought ourselves exceedingly fortunate, when employed on the composition of an ordinary letter, in having so managed as to embody the principle of our vindication, and make it palpable, as we thought, within the compass of a few sentences. We were therefore tempted by the chance

of gaining additional converts, to insert that letter in a newspaper ;* and it has since been sent to various persons in a separate form. It has not been altogether without effect ; for though it deals with but one phenomenon, even that of unlet room in the church of the Canongate, it does so on a principle which is applicable to all kindred phenomena. Still, however, there must be both attention and the capacity of generalization to perceive this ; and, should either of these be wanting, another and distinct phenomenon—distinct, we mean, in respect of individuality, though the same in kind—will, in minds thus unfurnished, revive in all its original strength the old difficulty, of which we had too fondly imagined that it was now for ever done away with. Accordingly, after we had disposed of the argument grounded on the unlet seats of the Canongate, we find ourselves challenged anew, because of there being unlet seats also in Edinburgh. If repetition be nauseous to the reader, it is often infinitely more so to the writer—called upon to fight all the battle over again in some new quarter, and that with the very misconception which he had met and combated perhaps a hundred times before. The painter who is required to make successive copies of one of his own pictures will understand the feeling,—a feeling which every one, we apprehend, must lay his account with, who, intent upon some great practical achievement, must obtain the consent of many minds and many wills, ere that he can carry it ; and so is doomed, on every weary recurrence of the same oft-repeated objection, to a fresh reiteration of the same as oft-repeated argument.

* For this letter, see the Appendix A. And we have also thought it right to abridge the papers in the Guardian, and publish them in a separate form under the title of “ The Right Ecclesiastical Economy of a Large Town.”

2. We may here remark it as a deep and serious misfortune to any land, when, on a question of such momentous import, as the likeliest means for the moral and religious well-being of a community, whether viewed as a question of state or city legislation, the power to determine is lodged with men who will not bestow the time distinctly to comprehend, or the patience thoroughly to investigate. The misfortune is all the more aggravated in that this is pre-eminently a question, the principles of which are best verified on a walk of professional experience,—such principles therefore as none, we fear, (and these too in limited number,) but professional men will readily sympathize with. It is true that minds accustomed to generalization will recognise in every walk of experience, however peculiar, but other and interesting evolutions of the philosophy of our nature. They will respect truth from whatever quarter its informations are offered to them; and, measuring their confidence by the competency of the witnesses, they, from the very principle on which they would listen to physicians in things medical, or to mariners in things nautical, would also listen to ecclesiastics in things ecclesiastical. Now, we are the proper informants on the subject of moral education and the moral state of society. This is pre-eminently a thing ecclesiastical; for however contemptuously some may look to religion in itself, or as an abstract system of doctrine, it were in utter defiance to all the lights of history and observation, did they refuse to acknowledge the intimate practical association which obtains between the religion and morality of the common people. It is therefore a very possible thing, between our municipal functionaries, on the one hand, and our parliamentary commissioners, or even parliamentary legislators, on the other, that, in the unmingled secularity of their delibera-

tions, the highest interests of the community may be sacrificed, and for no other reason than because they repudiate the counsel which the teachers of Christianity are best qualified to give. It is indeed marvellous, in the busy agitation of men's spirits on the questions of civic and financial arrangement, how little, if at all, the question is entertained of the best method for moralizing a population, or of reclaiming them from the frightful degeneracy into which they have fallen. This highest of all considerations is scarcely recognised, and certainly not admitted as an element into the computations and reasonings of those practical men, who, under no other guidance than that of their wretched economics, and feeling no other impulse than that of a popular and prevailing cry, would abandon the cause of an influential system of instruction for the bulk of the people as unworthy of a single effort, unworthy almost of a single thought.

3. The principles on which to frame a sound ecclesiastical economy for large towns, are comprised in the four following propositions. (1.) That if the minister have part of a town assigned to him for his parish, but at the same time draws his congregation equally and indiscriminately from all its parts, he must not expect that he will be able to perform regular and week-day household attentions, both to his hearers and his parishioners. One or other must be given up—for, to expatiate during the week among his general hearers, and along with this to enter on the local and territorial cultivation of his parish, is beyond the limits of human strength, and whenever the combination is attempted, it will be found to be impossible. (2.) That the more inviting of these two walks, and, therefore, the one far more frequently preferred, is to go forth through the week among the scattered households of the congregation, where the inmates have

a certain amount of previous recognition for the clergyman who addresses them on the Sabbath, and a certain amount of that respect for Christianity which ensures him a friendly and reverential welcome—rather than to go forth on the contiguous households of a parochial territory, whose occupiers are strangers to himself, and strangers it may be in the mass to all the kindly and humanizing influences of religious observation. (3.) Even though the minister shall, on the impulse of what I hold to be the right view of his duty, resolve to make surrender of his stated hearers through the week, and to devote the whole of his spare time to the families of his parishioners alone, he does it under the mighty disadvantage of not being their Sabbath instructor in public, as well as their week-day friend and visitor in private. So that still the extra-parochial congregation, by their exclusion of the parishioners from church, proves a dead weight on his parochial usefulness, if not by dissipating the attentions of the clergyman all the week long among hearers who are not parishioners, at least, and even though these attentions should be all concentrated within the parochial territory, by deducting ten-fold from their moral influence, because expended upon his parishioners, who are not his hearers. (4.) That to afford a fair field for the clergyman, and place him in a condition of optimism for working the greatest possible effect both in respect to the filling of his church, and doing thorough justice to the families of his parish, the hearers and the parishioners ought to be as nearly identified as possible, in order that the united influence of the ministerial and pastoral duties may be brought to bear in one unbroken application on the same individuals living in a state of juxta-position to each other. And it is only when, on the one hand the parish is small enough for his becoming the acquaintance of all

its families, and, on the other, when the place of worship is large enough, (and not pre-occupied withal,) for the accommodation of all within the limits of his charge who should be church-goers—it is only then that he is in fair circumstances for realizing within the heart of a large town the efficacy of the parochial system of Scotland.

4. These propositions we have elaborated and expanded in the papers to which we have already referred of the *Scottish Guardian*, but we fear at too great a length for the impatient reader, and the no less impatient thinker of the present day. We should hold it but fair, that he either took the propositions now announced upon trust, or if he won't do this, that he made a study of these papers.* We shall feel it hard if he will do neither; or at all events we shall be utterly hopeless of obtaining from him an intelligent assent to any of our conclusions. Nevertheless, let us make one attempt more to demonstrate how it is, that in our great towns all the principles of a sound ecclesiastical system have been most cruelly traversed, more especially in Edinburgh,—and that for the purpose of establishing that the extension of the Church of Scotland is not to be given up in despair as a vain and fruitless enterprise, because of the wretched mismanagement in things ecclesiastical, with the melancholy results of it, which has taken place in the metropolis of Scotland.

5. Let it be premised, that Edinburgh proper, or Edinburgh within the limits of the royalty, has a population of 55,232; but that its suburb population, greatly augmented within the last half century, is now nearly double the city population. The population of the con-

* Or rather now of the tract referred to in a former note.

tiguous parishes of St. Cuthbert's, Canongate, and Leith, consists, by the last census, of 106,924. For the inhabitants of the city, amounting, as we have seen, to upwards of 55,000, there is a provision of eighteen ministers, who officiate in thirteen churches—five of these churches being still what in Scotland we term collegiate churches, that is, having each the services of two ministers attached to them. The days were when not only had the inhabitants of the royalty the exclusive occupation of their own churches, but when it was the invariable habit for the residents of each separate parish to attend the proper and peculiar church of that parish. It appears, indeed, from Calderwood and others, that the violation of this order on the part of any of the inhabitants inferred ecclesiastical censures. We do not advocate this compulsory restriction of the people to their own parish church. It is the reverse policy of what is tantamount to their compulsory exclusion from it that we complain of; and in virtue of which, it is now made to appear, that in the Old Town of Edinburgh, chiefly occupied by the common people, and consisting of 28,196 inhabitants, only 727 attend the parish churches of the city. We propose to trace the footsteps of the process which has led to this result, and to shew from it how the alleged phenomena of unlet sittings are to be accounted for.

6. It is unnecessary to explain here how the fund set apart by law for the maintenance of the clergy in Edinburgh is fitted to subserve the great object of an establishment, which is to provide Christian instruction on practicable terms to all ranks and degrees of the people. The present ecclesiastical revenue of Edinburgh proper would nearly overtake this its legitimate object, if restricted as it ought in the application of its benefits to the inhabitants of Edinburgh pro-

per. Let the parish churches have but continued open as they were at the first to the parish families, absolved, and by this very fund, from the expense of maintaining their own clergyman, and absolved, we shall imagine, from every other exaction—so as to have cheap and easy access to the sittings which are rightfully theirs; and we might at this hour have had the goodly spectacle of parochial churches filled by parochial congregations. We might have seen our city churches filled with the great mass and staple of their respective populations in the city parishes,—a sprinkling of aristocracy, no doubt, to deck and variegate the scene, but withal, an overwhelming majority of the men of handicraft and hard labour; or, to express it otherwise, as the aristocracy has greatly enlarged its dimensions of late years, we should have had a large infusion of that highly respectable class in society who are at or above the ten-pounders, with a much larger substratum in the proportion of three, four, or five to one of a class still more interesting,—those beneath the ten-pounders. And whether, within the church, we beheld the spectacle of its compressed and crowded pews occupied by workmen and their groups of decent families; or without the church, and at the sound of the well-known parish bell, saw every house along the line of our most plebeian streets pouring forth its family of worshippers—we should then, and before our city establishment was perverted, have seen in palpable and living exemplification the richest blessings of an establishment realized. But it is now incumbent upon me to explain what I mean by this perversion, and make known who were the authors of it.

7. I have spoken of it as one great good of an establishment, that it provided the means of bringing Christian instruction within the reach of the whole popula-

tion, to which I shall add another of at least equal importance, but which it can only secure by adhering to the parochial or territorial principle; and that is, the assignation to each of its ministers of a certain local assemblage of families who reside within a specified boundary, and with the pastoral care of whom he is made chargeable. But, in the case of Edinburgh, another party, a party between the church and the population, have stepped in, and, by the manner in which they have interposed, the good of an establishment has been cruelly broken up. For, first, in the matter of seat-letting the parochial principle has been given to the wind. It is no reply to this that the magistrates and council do hold out a preference for the seats of every church to the inhabitants of that church's parish. The enormous seat-rents have completely neutralized the effects of this preference; and, in reference to the great bulk and body of the lower orders, have reduced it to the mockery of a name. So that, practically, the matter proceeds thus: the seats are as good as put up to auction; for it is altogether tantamount to this that they are held forth at a price, calculated and determined by the known acceptance and popularity of the minister. At this price, amounting to two pounds each, for the highest individual sittings, and to 13s. 3d.* each for an average of the whole, the church accommodation within the royalty is open to the competition of all, whether within or without the royalty, whether the 55,000 inhabitants of Edinburgh proper, or the population of nearly double that number in the contiguous parishes of Canongate, and Leith, and St. Cuthbert's, who, in the course of two or three generations, have so thickened

* This is calculated from the last returns, by compounding the number with the prices.

and multiplied around it. The consequence is inevitable. The families, and more especially of the Old Town, have been ousted from their own proper churches; and the clergymen of these parishes, saddled with general congregations, have been dissevered from their own parish families. The working classes have been shouldered out of the Sabbath-places which belonged to them, by richer competitors from all distances, and from all points of the compass. I always understood it as a great argument for an establishment, that in providing for the support of the minister, it provided a cheap, if not a gratuitous Christian ministration, so as to make the services of the minister and the accommodation in his church a sort of common good to the folk of his parish. But the Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh have taken another way of it: and still, however, make they a common good of it. After having wrested from the parishioners of the Old Town their proper and original interest in the sittings of their own churches, and exposed what they thus wrested to general sale—the proceeds of the unhallowed merchandize still go to a common good, it would appear, and that is to the common good of the city corporation. This sounds patriotically; but, in plain English, they have turned, and in what numbers I shall presently tell,—they have turned the working classes of Edinburgh adrift into the outfields of heathenism; and with the price of those Sabbath-places from which they have ejected them do they enrich their own treasury. They have in effect planted a toll-gate, a most expensive toll-gate, at the entry of each of the city churches, by which to keep the poor of its parish out, and to let the rich, not of the parish, in. It is they, the magistrates and town-council, who erected these turnpikes; it is they who ordained the tolls, and who sit at the receipt

of custom to obtain the produce of them. It is no reply whatever to this, that the produce is little more than a return for the outlay. We ask, who built these churches? Who bartered away the Christian education of the people for the adornment of the city? At whose bidding were these costly fanes, these magnificent temples made to arise? And then, who are chargeable with the enormity of having made sacrifice at their shrine of the religion of our common people? The plain answer is, the Magistrates and Town-Council of Edinburgh. They have as good as driven the lower classes of the city from the occupancy they once had in the city churches; and hold out to them instead, some stately architecture to gaze at. The families in thousands have been plundered of the bread of life, and instead of bread their plunderers have given them a stone. Such has been the practice hitherto of the city corporation; and after such experience of their care for the moral and religious well-being of the community, it becomes the public to ponder carefully and well the character and effect of any proposition relative either to churches or clergymen, which might emanate from that honourable body.

8. I have dwelt the longer on this topic, that it has been converted into a grievous charge against the clergymen of Edinburgh; and they, in consequence of it, have been made the unmerited victims of a gross popular delusion. These high seat-rents are clearly the doing of the magistrates; yet the ministers have borne all the odium of it. Theirs is all the benefit; but to the clergy, as usual, is all the obloquy and scorn. It is a very glaring abuse in a matter, too, ecclesiastical; and at whose door therefore ought it to be laid but at that of the ecclesiastics? Now, it so happens, that the ecclesiastics have struggled with all their might against

it. Times and ways without number, have the Presbytery of Edinburgh remonstrated with the city authorities upon this subject, and set up their earnest representations both by memorials and at interviews, for an act of justice to the population. Individual clergymen, at the head of their sessions, have implored a mitigation of the evil in behalf of their own parishioners. The minister of the Tolbooth church has been quite incessant in his appliances for relief, and of late has been somewhat eased, but still at the expense of other parishes and other congregations. This clergyman is not more distinguished by his unwearied parochial assiduities, than by his endeavours to obtain for himself a parochial congregation; but the barrier of these seat-rents stood in his way, and, in his attempts to remove it, many are the buffetings which he has had to endure—as on one occasion, some years ago, when the Council felt annoyed by his urgencies; and “we shall raise these Tolbooth seat-rents still higher, if pestered any more about them,” was the lordly reply of one of these city magnates. And yet the enemies of our church can manage, notwithstanding, to make this very grievance the mean of kindling into greater fierceness and intensity the flame of discontent and hatred against the clergy. Even one of our city-rulers themselves, (and this I hold to be one of the most beautiful examples of the kind of justice which our establishment is now receiving at the hands of its adversaries), a distinguished member of Council,* and therefore art and part in doubling, some time ago, the seat-rents of the College church, and, more than art and part, who sig-

* Mr. Adam Black, bookseller,—the correspondent, and, it is understood, the influential adviser in matters ecclesiastical, of Mr. Abercromby, Speaker of the House of Commons.

nalized himself by his opposition to a church of low seat-rents in the Cowgate; even he, an accessory, or rather a principal in this process of banishing our poor from the city churches, and member of the body on whom the whole responsibility of this fearful injustice should be laid, makes it one of his contemptuous charges against the establishment in Edinburgh, that it is of no further use than to furnish sermons to ladies and gentlemen. It is much about this period that a poem was ushered into the world, under the auspices of another of our then city rulers, that is, in one of the recent Numbers of Tait's Magazine. We may give it entire.

THE POOR CHRISTIAN AND THE CHURCH.

“He has incurred a long arrear
And must despair to pay.”—COWPER.
“To the poor the gospel is (not) preached.”

“How glorious Zion's courts appear,”
The pious poor man cries :
“Stand back, you knave, you're in arrears,”
The manager replies.

POOR CHRISTIAN.

“The genius of the Christian code
Is charity, humility ;”

MANAGER, (*in a rage.*)

“I've let your pew to ladies, Sir,
Of high respectability.”

POOR CHRISTIAN.

“And am I then debarred the house
Where erst my father pray'd ?
Excluded from the hallowed fane
Where my loved mother's laid ?”

MANAGER.

" *Their* seat-rent, Sir, was never due ;
 The matter to enhance,
 As duly as the term came round,
 They paid it in advance."

POOR CHRISTIAN.

" The temple of the living God
 Should have an open door,
 And Christ's ambassadors should preach
 The Gospel to the poor."

MANAGER.

" We cannot, Sir, accommodate
 The poor in their devotions ;
 Besides we cordially detest
 Such antiquated notions."

" We build our fanes, we deck our pews,
 For men of wealth and station ;
 (Yet for a time the thing has proved
 A losing speculation.)"

" Then table down your cash anon
 Ere you come *here* to pray ;
 Else you may wander where you will,
 And worship where you may."

POOR CHRISTIAN.

" Then I shall worship in that fane
 By God to mankind given ;
 Whose lamps are the meridian sun,
 And all the stars of heaven ;

Whose walls are the cerulean sky,
 Whose floor the earth so fair,
 Whose dome is vast immensity :—
 All nature worships there."*

† The last stanza of this poem is a quotation from Vedders' Covenanter's Sabbath.

The author intimates very clearly his opinion that each of the city churches is a den of thieves ; but who, I would ask, are the perpetrators of the thievery ? Of that he gives us no information. Who was it that doubled the seat-rents of the College Church last year, when the more acceptable minister succeeded to the one that was less acceptable ? Mr. Cunningham is a house-going clergyman ; and from the first moment of his appointment has been labouring with all his might among the families of his plebeian parish, with the view of gathering out from it a church-going people. But I will venture to say that by this act of the Magistracy, an insuperable barrier has been raised between the church that he preaches in, and at least one thousand of his parishioners. They are in a very fit state for having this song put into their mouths, every stanza of which, on the other hand, is equally fit to exasperate the bitterness of their feelings ; but against whom ? against the city clergy who are guiltless, and that for the deed of the city rulers who are not guiltless. And it but consummates this history, it gives its greatest curiosity and perfection to it—that a song thus dealt out among a population whom themselves have so deeply injured, is furnished and set forth by one of their own number.*

9. Such, then, is the procedure of the Magistrates of Edinburgh in the letting of our city churches. They have taken into their own hands the power of dealing with the seats as they would with any article of merchandise which was rightfully theirs. They set a price upon their occupancy—making this price to rise or fall with the eligibility of the church's situation, or with the fancied popularity of the clergyman. And they are not the parishioners of Edinburgh, not the inhabitants

* See Appendix B.

within the limits of the royalty, who are the sole competitors or customers in this trade of seat-letting. The whole public, both in and about Edinburgh, are admitted to the competition; and the unavoidable consequence is, that, speaking in the bulk, the common people of the town have been dispossessed of their own churches by the wealthy of the town and neighbourhood. The Magistrates hold themselves entitled to draw for these seats, whatever, to use their own expression, may be found to be "their worth in the market." We say nothing at present as to the legality of this claim.* We speak of the effect which necessarily and historically ensues from the practical assumption of it. The clergy have one and all of them been dissevered from their own parish families. The tie between ministers and parishioners is broken. The two parties have, in virtue of this unnatural separation, very much lost sight of each other. Generally and collectively speaking, the ministers do not preach to their parishioners on the Sabbath; and occupied as they are with the labours of an extra-parochial congregation, they are placed in most helpless circumstances for rendering to the people of their own territorial vineyard any sensible amount of pastoral or week-day attentions. And even though they could, the pastoral duties are bereft of almost all their efficacy in virtue of the ministerial being disjoined from them. The parochial system has been entirely broken up by the cruel interposition of the Magistrates, who, throughout their whole administration of this department in the affairs of the city, have betrayed so little of either paternal or patriotic regard for the moral or religious well-being of the community. All along it has been a shameful traffic for the enrichment of the city

* See Appendix C.

treasury, at the expense of the Christianity of the common people. The wealthier classes, who now pay their enormous seat-rents, could have afforded to build, and even endow, churches for themselves. In which case the existing churches, and especially in the Old Town, might have been left unviolated for their proper and original design, which was the accommodation of their own parish families; and thus the Establishment been suffered to prosecute its own rightful and peculiar task as a dispenser of Christianity to the general population.

10. The people of the country at large, and particularly our neighbours in the south, will be no longer at a loss to understand that peculiar acerbity of feeling which exists in Edinburgh on the subject of the establishment. In the first place, the fund for the maintenance of its clergymen, though it does not come *from* the pockets of the householders, any more than tithe does from the occupiers of land, yet it comes *through* their pockets, and practically they feel as if it was all paid by themselves. The meaning and object of such a fund is, that they and all others of the parish should have free or at least cheap access to their parish church; and when, instead of this, they are met, through the intervention of city exactors, by an enormous charge in the form of seat-rents, they feel it, and most naturally, a hard and oppressive thing that they should have another heavy sum, and in the shape too of an ecclesiastical imposition, to pay over again. The feeling is all the more aggravated that the people without the royalty, and who have none of the annuity to pay for ministers' stipend, are, in respect of admittance to the city churches, on equal terms with themselves: and if excluded from their own rightful occupancies by wealthier competitors from abroad, who can afford to pay a greater rent than they are either willing or able for, it is a sore and irri-

tating reflection that they should have the burden of the ecclesiastical establishment of Edinburgh laid upon them without any of its benefits. The right ground of complaint here obviously lies in the intervention of this third party, the Magistrates of Edinburgh, who change and augment the seat-rents at pleasure for the purposes of a revenue to the city corporation. But for this intervention, and had the system of parochial seat-letting been observed, we might at this hour have seen the great bulk of the inhabitants within the royalty accommodated on easy terms at their own proper churches; and the branded annuity tax, if tax it must be called, would mainly and substantially have been a tax on the wealthier classes of society for the Christian instruction of society at large. They are our city rulers who have cruelly broken up this bland and beneficent economy, by the imposition of another and distinct tax, which the former one was meant to supersede, and of which latter tax they receive all the produce, while the ministers have to bear all the odium of it. The ministers have thus been dissevered from their own parish populations, and placed in a false and obnoxious position before the eyes of the general community; and never perhaps in the history of human injustice has there occurred a more signal example of it, than that the perpetrators of a great public mischief should have so succeeded in shifting the burden of its consequent indignation from themselves, and laying it on the heads of men who suffer nothing but cruelty and contumely at their hands. They are the Town-Council of Edinburgh who extort these enormous seat-rents for the supply of their own treasury. And yet there are members of that Council who labour with all their might to direct the exasperation of their own measures against the persons and character of the men who have no

hand in them. They are the Town-Council of Edinburgh, who, in the management of the church's affairs, have smitten it with the impotency, and worse than the impotency, of the voluntary system; and then, by a publication of unlet seats, charged throughout with false principle and erroneous calculation, flash on the public eye the result of their own misdoings, as if the doings of an establishment, all whose arrangements they have departed from, and all whose principles they have violated. The effect of their last issued manifesto, blazoned in all the newspapers, and industriously distributed among our public and parliamentary men, is to lesson both the country and the government into the conclusion, that a religious establishment is a useless and ill-working thing, and so it is truly in the hands of such bungling and hostile administrators. They may be truly said to have it all their own way in the controversy; for they have not only propounded the argument, but with their own hands they have created its materials. After having multiplied in sufficient number the proofs of their own worthless misgovernment, they place them in full array before the eyes of the community, as proofs of the worthlessness of the church. Such is the exquisite injustice of our city rulers; but we trust that neither the government nor the country will be any longer deceived by it, nor confound the effects of an establishment rightly conducted, with the effects of its wretched mal-administration in the town of Edinburgh.

11. The general character, then, of the actual system in Edinburgh may be stated thus.—The citizens in their respective parishes have no preference held out to them for the vacant sittings in their own proper churches. The competition is quite general and indiscriminate; and applicants, in whatever place of re-

sidence, or from whatever distances, are (saving in cases of personal favouritism,) upon equal terms. We have heard it professed by some of our city rulers, that the preference of parishioners is their law of seat-letting. But it has been little acted upon. The public at large have no distinct or confident understanding of this; and so, if ever proclaimed as a rule, or given as an instruction, practically it is of no effect. Now this at once dissolves the most beneficial association which can by any possibility be established between ministers and their parishes. The strongest tie which can bind a clergyman to his territorial vineyard is broken. On the simple cessation of the preference which we are now contending for, the exchange forthwith proceeds, and is speedily consummated, of a parochial for a general congregation; and so in every great town, we fear, of the empire, all those manifold facilities as well as commanding moral influence, which lie in the conjoined forces of the ministerial and the pastoral, when wielded by the same individual upon the contiguous households of one and the same locality, are altogether unknown.

12. But superadded to this there is another cause, which, even had the preference that we now advocate been most rigidly acted on, would of itself have effected an almost entire disruption between the plebeian parishes of the city and their respective clergymen. We mean the extravagant seat-rents; and those laid on at the arbitrary discretion of the Town-Council, in opposition to the earnest remonstrances of the Presbytery, as well as the special and importunate requests of those individual clergymen who have interested themselves in this matter on behalf of their own parochial families. It is true that these seat-rents are variable, and differ in different churches. But it is not the con-

dition of the parish in regard to its wealth or poverty, which forms the rule or principle of these variations. It is the popularity of the clergyman which virtually reduces the letting of seats to the same footing with the letting of houses or fields. In effect, these church-seats are let at such a price as they will fetch; and like any other marketable commodity, they undergo the substantial process of an auction, whether or not they undergo the forms of it. In other words, each parochial community is exposed to the foreign competition of their whole surrounding neighbourhood. The wealth of the New Town and of the suburbs is brought to bear with overwhelming effect on the Old Town parishes, whose people, ejected from their ancient ecclesiastical privileges, have forsaken their ancient habits, and are now fast degenerating, or rather by an immense majority have actually sunk, into a state of heathenism.

13. Having thus stated the general character of the actual system in Edinburgh, let us now state the general effect of it on the condition and habits of the city population. It is true that under this system many churches might still continue to be served by able and impressive clergymen, and to be filled even to an overflow with large and admiring auditories. And yet, in perfect compatibility with this phenomenon, there might, and in rapid process of formation, be a dense and ever enlarging mass of heathenism in society. Wherever a predisposition to Christianity is strong enough, attendance on its lessons will still be kept up, even under this system with all its disadvantages. But unfortunately it is not a predisposition which, with the generality of mankind, can be confided to any spontaneous or inherent vigour of its own; and it will therefore die away from the hearts of the vast majority, unless it be sustained by an aggressive force *ab extra*, by

an incessant appliance of means and influences from without. A general congregation may be regarded as the product of a combined voluntary movement on the Sabbath, by the hearers, to the minister. A parochial congregation, made out from the contiguous households of any given territory, can only be formed at the first and kept up afterwards, by a voluntary movement through the week in dutiful and frequent reiteration of the minister to the hearers. Let this parochial system, then, be supplanted by the general system; and it is the inevitable effect, that the parish families will one by one, and at length in great numbers, fall away, and beyond the scope of any external force which might recover or recall them. They recede from the observation of the minister, who, after losing sight of them, finds himself abundantly occupied with other duties and other cares. After that the moral force of the clergyman's attentions has been withdrawn from the habitations of the poor, and the wonted facilities of access to the church he preaches in have also been barred against them, we are not to wonder at the rapid irreligion which ensues; or that so many families, when thus left to the earthliness of their own nature, should gravitate, and with an accelerated velocity of descent, into a state of entire earthliness. The contagion spreads every year; and whether it be by the degeneracy of old families or the importation of new ones, each plebeian parish, in effect outlawed from the moral regimen of an Established Church, changes only to the worse, and takes on a deeper hue of moral desolation. From the moment that ministers have lost the old territorial means, or quitted the old territorial management, from that moment their parishes have become territories of heathenism; and hence it is that vice has obtained a local or geographical settlement in certain quarters, which,

with somewhat the feeling of a possessory right, it now claims as being peculiarly its own. But in truth, by this departure from the parochial system, the evil has become quite general, and extends over the whole city. Let families lapse where they may into a regardlessness of the gospel and its ordinances, there is no effective care or cognizance taken of them.* The place in which they live brings no security along with it that a full moral or religious attention will be bestowed upon them. And from the time that ministers have given up a special surveillance, each of his own definite and assumed locality, has the aggregate community, let slip from all the ancient holds, drifted at random as they may, wholly given over to the counsel of their own hearts and the sight of their own eyes.

14. But let us now exhibit in ascertained numbers the precise amount of this degeneracy as verified by actual observations taken, and certainly without any selection, from various parts of the Old Town of Edinburgh. Even the last returns issued from the council-chamber present us with appalling enough information on this head, when it tells that the whole of the Old Town, with a population of 28,196, has only 727 rented sittings in all the city churches, while in the extended royalty, with a population of 27,036, there are 4746 who have seats in the city churches. The remaining seat-payers, amounting to 3826, live beyond the royalty ; so that between the New Town and its environs, the people of the Old Town have suffered a grievous dispossession from the churches of the Establishment,—insomuch that less than 1 in 38 of the inhabitants

* Not necessarily arising from the carelessness of the minister, but, as we have already explained, from the circumstances by which he is surrounded.

of the Old Town pay for sittings in the places which the Establishment has provided for them. This fact, which our adversaries call a proof of the inefficacy of the Establishment, and which we call a proof of the sore mischief that the Magistrates have inflicted upon it, might well excite our alarms for the moral and ecclesiastical state of the population, and direct the footsteps of the anxious and exploring philanthropist to their actual abodes, that at their own mouths he may learn how it fares with them. It is there, in fact, where he will gather his far most valuable statistics for the elucidation of the true principle and philosophy of his whole subject,—statistics which have been sadly neglected and overlooked, but which nevertheless contain the real materials of the question at issue. And there are more lessons than one to be drawn from such a survey. We shall there learn not only how little the establishment, made powerless by the magistracy, has done for the general population, but also how little an unfettered voluntary system has done to supplement its deficiencies, and so how much remains for the Establishment to do, when restored to its original energies and rights, and rescued from the grasp of those unworthy hands which have done nothing but pervert and paralyze it,—those adversaries who first cripple the church and then calumniate it,—who have struck it with impotency, and would now hold forth that venerable institute, which themselves have marred and disabled, as a spectacle of derision to the land.

15. The following, then, are a few specimens of the state of the population with respect to seat-holding. It exhibits the number in every district which has been made the subject of an ecclesiastical survey, who have this guarantee for the regularity of their attendance on a place of worship, that they have purchased,

or otherwise obtained for themselves a right of occupation there. That over and above these some do attend and occupy sittings they do not pay for there can be no question. Their precise number it is difficult to ascertain, though most certainly they form but a small proportion of the whole population. At all events it is a most undesirable state of things, that any of our people should be exposed to a shift which cannot be taken without a certain moral violence being suffered, a certain moral deterioration being sustained by it. We have evidence for at least a good many hundreds among the tens of thousands who go nowhere that do occupy sittings, but occupy them by stealth,—a condition of things, in respect of church-accommodation, that should be put an end to, whether by a sufficient number of free sittings, or what were greatly more to our taste in towns, a sufficient number of very cheap sittings, amounting to at least two-thirds of the whole church-room. Of all illicit things, there is none which appears to us more incongruous or unseemly than an illicit attendance at church. It wont proceed so far among the population as to effectuate anything like a general attendance upon ordinances. It will stop with a certain, and that not a very large portion of the people ; and even with them there is something unhealthful about such a system of church-going,—frail and precarious in respect of habit, equivocal in respect of character.

16. But the number who actually possess the right of sittings, whether by purchase or otherwise, can be definitely ascertained, and the following are the specimens, as far as we have selected them, of the Old Town of Edinburgh. Let it be particularly remarked of the second column, that the numbers comprehend all the seat-holders, of every denomination, in or out of the Establishment.

	Population.	Seats taken in all Places of Worship.		
In the Tolbooth Parish* ~~~~~	3256	450	less than 1 in 7	Rev. Mr. Marshall
A District in the Grassmarket~	417	19	1 in 22	Rev. Mr. Wilkie
A larger section of the same ~~~	1348	89	less than 1 in 13	Rev. David Mitchell
An eastern and better part of the Cowgate~~~~~	420	74	less than 1 in 5	Dr. Abercrombie
A westerly and worse part of the Cowgate, comprehending the district from Alison's Close to Old Fishmarket Close~~~~~	865	96	1 in 9	Rev. W. B. Clark
First District of Old Greyfriars	624	68	less than 1 in 9	Rev. D. Mitchell
A District of the New North Parish ~~~~~	620	†40	less than 1 in 15	Rev. Mr. Bruce
College Parish~~~~~	3300	418	1 in 8	Rev. Mr. Cunningham
North side of the Cowgate, Old Greyfriars, from the bottom of the Old Fishmarket Close to the bottom of Blair Street ~~~~~	297	28	less than 1 in 10	Rev. W. B. Clark
South side of the Cowgate, from the Horse Wynd to the College Wynd, and west side of the College Wynd~~~~~	262	9	1 in 29	Do. do.

17. Such, then, is the *general* effect, the effect in the main, of the ecclesiastical system that has been adopted in Edinburgh. It has effected a most violent and unnatural disruption between the churches and their corresponding parishes. It has broken up the old con-

* As a specimen of statistical minuteness and care, I may here mention the last document put into my hands respecting that Parish, and in which the statistics are given of the north side of the Castlehill, from the Castle downwards to No. 529, High Street, in which we have the domicile of each family, the occupation of its head, the number of its members above and below 12 years of age, and the number of seats taken in all places of worship, with the denomination and place of attendance. The population of this district is 418, among whom there are 59 seat-holders, being less than one in seven of the whole. The Rev. John Thomson, a probationer, and Mr. Andrew S. Bonar, a student of divinity, have affixed their names to this document.

† It should be remarked that this, and indeed all the worst houses of Mr. Bruce's Parish have been swept away by the late improvements; and as the best part of it has been spared, it now exhibits a very improved proportion of seat-holders to the whole population—it still, however, being less than one in six. The numbers are as follow :—Inhabitants 810, Seat-holders 132.

nexion of the city clergymen and the families of their respective vineyards—the former now occupied with their general congregations, the latter set adrift from their own places of worship, and exiled from the attentions of their own proper ministers. But for this cruel disruption, the entire work of the Magistrates of Edinburgh, who, in the grossness of the mercantile spirit, have recklessly and unfeelingly turned our churches into a mercantile speculation—but for this we might still have beheld in full vigour the influence of the parochial system with all its kindly relationships throughout the mass of the Old Town population, having nine churches to accommodate them on the Sabbath, and twelve clergymen to concentrate upon them the whole force of their week-day services. They are our city rulers who have stepped in between these two parties—inflicting thereby a sore degradation on the people, and a sore despite and odium upon the clergymen. The upper door-keepers of our churches have done on the large scale what the door-keepers beneath them are said to do upon the small. They have let in the ladies and gentlemen who can give, and they have kept out the common people who cannot give. It is thus that the inhabitants of the New Town have dispossessed the inhabitants of the Old. Had it not been for this, the whole of the ancient Royalty might still *en masse* have presented us with a church-going population; and the opulent from without, who compose our present general congregations and who pay a seat-rent above £7000 a-year to the city corporation, could have equally afforded to build and endow a requisite number of churches for themselves. It is the seizure of this money by the hands of the magistrates, and the diversion of it into their own treasury, which has done the whole mischief, which has ejected the common people of the Old Town from their places of rightful occupancy in

their own churches, and laid an arrest on that prosperous and progressive increase of churches to which the affluence of the New Town would otherwise have given birth. It is they, we repeat, who have utterly distempered the ecclesiastical system of the establishment in Edinburgh. It has been the doing of several generations; and the measure of the iniquity is now filled up, when the accumulated mischief which their own hands have perpetrated is laid as a burden of reproach on the head of that establishment which they have all along laboured to disable, and our adversaries amongst them now labour to destroy.

18. But it is now time to enter in detail on the returns* which have been circulated and set forth to the public eye with so much eagerness. The bare inspection of the tables will prove the extreme haste with which they have been constructed, as if some urgent and immediate purpose were to be gained by it. They exhibit a number of arithmetical discrepancies between sums and their items, between the whole amount of sittings in the church this year and last, though no change has been made either in the number of pews or in their capacity. For these, and certain minor explanations which account for so many of the unlet sittings, we refer to the notes which are placed after the Tables in the Appendix. We shall confine ourselves to the explanations of the greatest real effect in the question at issue.

19. The explanation then which we hold to be the first in order, because of greater arithmetical importance than all the rest put together, is, that the number who do occupy sittings in our churches greatly exceeds the number who pay for them. There cannot be a doubt that never was there a larger attendance

* For one of these Returns, see Appendix D.

on the churches of the city, than at this moment; an attendance that is progressively increasing, is much larger now than it was ten years ago, and very greatly larger than it was twenty or thirty years ago. It is really not a church phenomenon, but a cess-office phenomenon that we are called to account for. It is not the system of non-attendance, but the system of non-payment that is upon the increase; and we appeal to some of our city rulers if they have not themselves to thank for it. Have they not given every encouragement to the non-payment of the church-annuity; and are they now to be astonished if the principle which they have thus encouraged shall recoil upon themselves in the non-payment of the church-rents? Resistance, in fact, to all sorts of payment for public objects is of late becoming more and more the order of the day; and our reformed Town-Council, under whose auspices the habit certainly has not diminished, must not expect of the community a special exception in their own favour. But in either way a double mischief is laid upon the clergy. By the one non-payment they are made to suffer in their means of subsistence; by the other they are made to suffer in their credit. There is truly a hard task put into their hands. They must suffer, without a murmur, the resistance of the people to the one ecclesiastical impost, in a consequent decline of their own personal revenue; but unless they can, at the same time, school the people out of their resistance to the other ecclesiastical impost, theirs must be all the reproach of the consequent decline in the revenues of the city. To avail ourselves of our own Scotch language, they have not only to bear all the skaith of the one non-payment, but all the scorn of the other. Meanwhile, however it fares with either of these revenues, the attendance on the whole, that only true test of the acceptance of our clergymen, is

rapidly upon the increase. The Old Greyfriars, with its 417 unlet sittings, when Mr. Sym preaches, is quite full. The Tolbooth Church, excepting such seats as are absolutely useless, being out of all sight and hearing of the clergyman, and a few of the highest rented in the fronts of galleries—this church with its 467 unlet sittings is quite full. The communicants of the Tron Church exceed the number of seat payers, and these in general form but a part of the whole congregation—a very palpable proof how much the occupation of seats might outstrip the renting of them.* In short, it will be found, that with the exception of two, or at most three, of our city churches, there is a large or increasing attendance upon all, and a crowded attendance upon a greater number than at any period within the memory of any now alive. At least nine-tenths of the clerical appointments which have taken place within the last fifteen years have turned out prosperous appointments, we mean prosperous in the ecclesiastical sense of the word as followed up by an increase in the number of hearers, or at least by the maintenance of the very large congregations which were bequeathed from one popular clergyman to another. Even the College Church, which is made in the returns of the Town-Council to exhibit the most adverse phenomenon in the whole record, forms a remarkable exemplification of the real progress of the establishment in Edinburgh, and that in spite of all the disadvantages with which it has to struggle. The appointment of Mr. Cunningham was ecclesiastically a most prosperous one, being followed up by an attendance very much greater than that of his predecessor; and nothing but the eagerness of the Town-Council to make it as prosperous in their

* For a more particular reckoning in these details, see Appendix D.

sense of the word, or to make it as municipally prosperous as it was ecclesiastically so, has enabled the adversaries of the church in that corporation to present an exhibition of decline. On observing the first year's attendance at the old rents, they determined to make their own harvest of it; and on the second year of Mr. Cunningham's incumbency, the rents were about doubled. By that single act they raised a barrier against at least a thousand of the College Church parishioners. The increased rent came as an unexpected demand on the seat-holders of 1833-4, many of whom refused compliance with it; and whether they continue to occupy without paying, or have fallen away from their attendance and have been replaced by others, certain it is that there is no visible abatement in the bulk or density of the congregation. There is no decline to be seen in the attendance of the church. The only decline that can be seen is in the ledgers of the city. We do not blame our civic functionaries for being so feelingly alive to this disappointment. But we do blame them for laying upon the clergy the obloquy and burden of their own doings. There can be no difficulty now in understanding why the great bulk of the parish families in the Old Town have fallen away from their attendance upon the establishment. The great bulk of the church room, which was rightfully and originally theirs, has been barred by the enormous seat-rents against their possible occupation of it. Of the whole 14,308 sittings in the city churches, only 216 are let at so low a rent as two shillings,—whereas in each of the new churches singly that are now providing for the population of Glasgow, there will be at least 300 of this description; and in that town of great and noble enterprise, one-half (it ought to be two-thirds) of the whole church room will be let at a price fully within the means of the work-

ing classes. It were well if they who dogmatize so confidently on the subject of seat-letting could take a comprehensive view of all the elements which have to do with this phenomenon. The greatest of these elements is strangely overlooked in the whole of this controversy—the influence of the ministers week-day attentions, first in creating, and afterwards in keeping up among the people of his parish their habit of Sabbath attendance. So indispensable in towns is the connexion between these two things, that were seat-rents let down at this moment to two shillings overhead, or even annihilated, so as to throw open the whole of the church room at accessible prices to the lowest of the people, we shall greatly mistake the result if we look for a great and visible increase of attendance *per saltum* on the part of the parish families. A low seat-rent is a *sine qua non*, without which their attendance, even in the most favourable circumstances, cannot be expected. But a low seat-rent has nothing in it of the efficiency of a positive or impellent cause, which must be set in operation before the people will generally move. To reduce the seat-rents is but to remove an obstacle in the way of the popular movement, not to give an impulse or to impress a direction on the movement itself. For this latter purpose there must be a laborious missionary work on the part of the clergyman, an aggressive influence throughout the tenements of the parish, that he may revive among its now torpid families a taste and a demand for the services of the sanctuary. In one word, he must become a house-going minister, ere they will become a church-going people. A very familiar and well-known example will illustrate this process. The fee of admittance to our College Museum was let down the other month from two shillings and sixpence to one shilling; and we have no doubt that

they who confound a *sine qua non* with an efficient cause, anticipated, in consequence, a sudden enlargement of the number of visitors. But in this expectation they have been greatly disappointed. It is not enough that a barrier is taken away ; a moving force must be put in operation. Not only must the reduction be generally known, but a dormant taste, a long-extinguished habit must be created anew, ere even the frequenting of our rich and splendid museum shall come to be generally acted on. And what is true of a place of entertainment is still more emphatically true of a place of worship and of religious instruction. The great bulk, if not of the lower, at least of the lowest class of society, have lost all value and demand for the Sabbath services of any denomination ; and it must be a very gradual work of great patience and great pains-taking, not ere their appetite for the ministrations of the gospel is filled, but ere the appetite is formed. The people must be compelled to come in ; and our city clergymen, occupied with their extra-parochial congregations are in the worst possible circumstances for such an achievement. It is not at all inexplicable to us, it is to our mind in perfect keeping with such a state of matters, that the high-rented seats should be better taken than those which are low-rented. They who have both the wealth and the will in all parts of the city and neighbourhood form the great staple of our congregations,—whereas they who have neither the wealth nor the will, the neglected families of our putrid lanes our deep and densely-peopled recesses, wanting the first of these elements, the wealth, can never once be found in any of the more commodious and respectable of our church-pews ; and wanting the second of these elements, the will, they turn from the crumbs and fragments which have been thrown down to them, and so leave unpaid the

wretched and worthless remainder of pauper sittings which have been left out for their occupation.

20. The reader will not fail to remark the very peculiar nature of the task which the Magistrates of Edinburgh have put into the hands of our city clergymen. They have made over to each a church and a parish; but the thing required is not that he, the minister, shall replenish that church from the families of that parish. It is not that you, the minister of the Old Greyfriars' church, shall go forth among the people of the Old Greyfriars' parish, and gather thence by the force of your attentions through the week a congregation who shall return your visits of kindness and piety by their attendance on the Sabbath. They have in no instance, for the purpose of facilitating such a process, allowed either the clergyman or his kirk-session that disposal of the mass of the church-room, or that command over the terms of its occupation which might enable them to hold out a preference for the vacant sittings to the parishioners, and at such rents as are adapted to the circumstances of a locality inhabited chiefly by artizans and labourers. Instead of facilitating so happy and healthful a process as this, they have thrown every obstruction across its way. One of the indispensable elements of course to its success is the appointment of a popular clergyman. This they provided about a year ago in the person of my excellent friend the Rev. Mr. Sym. But they took care to follow it up by another and an adverse element, which goes completely to neutralize it. They followed it up by a great increase of the seat rents, as if the only return they cared for, was of money to their own treasury — *their own common good*; not of improved moral and religious habits among the people to the salvation of unperishable souls and the common good of the community at large. The combination wanted, and which

with all my attempts for twenty years, I have never been able to realize, in opposition to the selfish views and the gross impracticable obtuseness of our civic and municipal functionaries both in Glasgow and Edinburgh,—the combination which my heart is set upon is the appointment of a vigorous and devoted city minister, who will concentrate his main efforts on the families of his own territorial vineyard, to a parish small enough for the exertions of one man, and with the privilege of a strict preference for the sittings of its own church, while at the same time the rent of these sittings shall be, one and all, low enough for the circumstances of the general population. And the task which I would assign to the minister thus appointed, is to fill that church out of that parish. On the strength of explanations which I have repeated in various works, times and ways without number,* I have to this hour the unshaken confidence, that he would find this a twenty-fold easier task than the task laid upon him by the Magistrates, which is not to fill the whole of a low-rented church out of a whole, and at the same time, a poor parish,—but out of that parish, or out of the whole city together, to fill up a scantling of low-rented sittings which the Magistrates have left, after they have monopolized the great body of the church and all its respectable sittings, held forth on their own arbitrary and unconscionable terms to the public at large. I observe, that in the Old Greyfriars' church, of 826 sittings there are, according to the returns, 35 sittings to be disposed of at 3 shillings, and 62 at 4

* See among other writings the second and third chapters of my work on the Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns, my tract on Churches and Chapels, and my last little pamphlet on the Right Ecclesiastical Economy of a Large Town.

shillings each.* The average rent of the higher sittings is above 10 shillings each. Now my position is, that it were a far more difficult achievement, in the actual circumstances of the Old Greyfriars' minister, to fill these few supplementary seats out of his parish, than out of the same parish to fill the whole church, were it put into the circumstances which I have ventured to recommend. The likelihoods and facilities of the latter achievement, I have expatiated over at such length, and with such frequency, on many former occasions, that I have not the heart for a fresh repetition of the argument. But I may advert for a moment to the difficulties of the former achievement, which is, not to make out an occupancy for the whole church, but to make out an occupancy for the miserable remnant left at low prices by the Magistrates, as an evidence of their great and patriotic desire for the moral well-being of our general population. Not to speak of the undoubted fact, that these remnants are always the largest when the ministers are the least attractive, what are we to think of the discouragements which lie in the way even of the most energetic and most popular clergymen, amid the conditions of that very singular pro-

* In the act of penning this sentence, there was handed in to me the following note from a friend:—"Mr. Sym is come in this minute from an examination of his church. The result knocks the report of the Magistrates on the head. There are no sittings at 2s. ; and the sittings at 3s. are not fit for a dog: and the sittings at 4s. are little better. No man, in his senses, would pay for one of them. What are we to think of those who publish such reports?—and what are we to think of the ministers who seem to think it a virtue to remain silent under every species of misrepresentation and abuse?"

It should be observed, that the seats marked at 3s. are reduced to 2s. in favour of parishioners,—still certainly too dear, however, if not fit for a dog.

blem, the fulfilment of which is expected at his hands? He, in the first place, is saddled with the burden and care of an extra-parochial congregation; and I must use the privilege of a professional man, in telling all those who are not professional, and asking them to believe it on my word, that the minister who attempts satisfactorily to overtake his week-day or pastoral duties to the families of his general hearers, has not a particle either of strength or time for the families of his parish; and they, after having fallen, by the neglect of two or three generations, into a habit of non-attendance upon the ministrations of the gospel, will never once think of looking after him unless he shall look after them.* But, in the second place, what heart can he have for the enterprise, when, after all, he has no more church-room to offer than would accommodate the fiftieth part of the population he moves amongst; and when, therefore, instead of being fired with the generous and hopeful enterprize of working a general and sensible effect on the mass of his people, by gathering hearers from every house, the whole result of his laborious and oft-repeated explorations, throughout a parochial community, which, in the most favourable circumstances, he would find to be sufficiently inert and impracticable, would be the recovery here and there of a hearer; thus diminishing to an extent that is quite disheartening the proportion between the fruit of his labour and the immense fatigue of it; likening his task to that of him who painfully searches out for particles of ruby in the sand of the sea-shore, or for a few sound grains that may be fit as seed in a heap of corn tainted with disease. But it is not enough that we

* This is more fully explained in the Right Ecclesiastical Economy of a Large Town.

speak of the adverse moral forces which operate upon the clergyman in an undertaking of this kind: there are also adverse moral forces operating in the minds of the people. In the first place, they will not submit to be drafted from one unpopular clergyman to another, by a new act of dispossession on the appointment of the new and more attractive preacher who has succeeded the old one. Then they will not be willing to exhibit themselves like the few notable specimens of a degraded caste among the ladies and gentlemen of the congregation at large; not so willing certainly as if they had a church to themselves, and were kept in countenance by the general aspect of its occupiers, consisting mainly of their own equals in society, the families of their fellow-workmen, and the families of the masters who employ them. They will not consent, and I cannot blame them, to be either pilloried near the roof in an upper tier of galleries; or squeezed into the odds and ends of acute-angled seats; or stuck behind pillars, and penned together in the darkest and most distant places of the fabric; or ranged in forms along the sides of passages, where they must either draw up or compress themselves into narrower dimensions, that the aristocrats of the congregation may have sufficient largeness and liberty when stalking by to the commodious sittings from whence themselves have been dispossessed. Give me, I say, a right constitution for a parochial church; and it were infinitely easier to fill that church from a population of the working classes, and fill it to the very door, than to fill up those wretched driblets of room, those shreds and patches of refuse accommodation of which we have been so boastfully told, as evidences at once of the great patriotism of the Edinburgh Magistrates, and, withal, the great powerlessness of the Edinburgh clergy. It is thus that the ministers of the city, even

those of them who have the most overflowing audiences in Scotland, our Muirs, our Candlishes, our Syms, our Bruces, our Marshalls, and our Gordons, have all had an account of unlet sittings preferred against them. But the injury to them is nothing compared to the deep and practical injustice that is done to the general population, whose Christianity has been suspended on the difficult and precarious condition that they shall first tender a price for the few ignoble places which, at the hand of their unfeeling rulers, is all that is offered to them. And because the worthless and humiliating offer is not accepted, this is held as a sufficient test of their hopeless and incorrigible depravity, to reclaim them from which not another expedient must be thought of, not another effort must be made.*

21. We shall conclude this remonstrance with the narrative of a recent transaction, and we leave the reader to judge what interpretation should be put upon it.

22. Our reformed Town-Council, when they first entered upon power, began their proceedings with the high imagination of something great to be done ; and equally high resolutions, we have no doubt, that theirs should be the glory of doing it. The reformation of our vicious ecclesiastical system was one of the earliest of their enterprizes ; and they were not long of grappling with

* Though I have abundantly expatiated elsewhere on another influence that has most essentially to do with this process, I have not adverted to it in the text, yet am unwilling to pass it altogether by. We mean that force of sympathy and example which operates so powerfully among next door neighbours, and so often begets a gregarious movement amongst the families of a contiguous population. This influence you may set agoing, if you have the command of as much church-room as will accommodate two or three hearers in every house of the parish ; but this influence you cannot set agoing, if you have only the command of as much church-room as will accommodate one hearer in every ten houses.

the Presbytery of Edinburgh on the subject. To one of their proposals, a reduction in the number of the clergymen, we never could consent, in the wofully unprovided state of our city families. But to another of their proposals, the uncollegiating of those charges which are served by two clergymen, we rendered our frank and immediate acquiescence, on the express understanding, however, that on the death of any of the collegiate ministers, a new church and parish should be provided for his successor. Two distinct opportunities have since occurred for carrying this arrangement into effect; the one in consequence of the death of Dr. Inglis, and the other of the death of Dr. Brown. But the great obstacle alleged from the very first by the members of the corporation was the state of the city funds, and their total inability for building new churches. Of this we ourselves undertook to relieve them; and by an appeal to a few chosen philanthropists, succeeded in raising enough of money for the erection of a church with a thousand sittings in the Cowgate. The district chalked out for it has a population of 2500, of which we had previously ascertained that not more than 250, or one in ten, were seat-holders in churches or meeting-houses of any denomination. We, therefore, had ample materials for the filling of our new church, once that the right moral means were brought to bear, and had operated a full effect upon them—we mean the unwearied assiduities of a new clergyman, whose office it should be, in conjunction with his coadjutors of the eldership and Sabbath schools, so to operate on the people of his assigned locality by his varied attentions through the week, as at length to constrain their willing attendance upon himself on the Sabbath. The lowest seat-rents fixed by the constitution of our proposed church, and never afterwards to be exceeded; the pre-

ference for its sittings secured in all time coming as the inalienable right of the parishioners ; the very residence of their future clergyman in the midst of them ; the necessary supplement of schools and other institutes for the completion of a parochial economy ; all, in short, which could enter into a right system of parochial means, or form the beau-ideal of a well-constituted parish for the working classes of a city,—all was arranged in our own mind ; and never, we confess, did our hopes run higher than when placed on the confines of a great moral experiment, we felt that now we had within our reach all the elements of that very combination which, for twenty years, we, in a vain and unequal contest with the power and the prejudices of municipal rulers, had struggled to realize. We required no outlay at their hands. Ours was to be all the contingent loss attendant upon the uncertainty, and all the actual loss as well as disgrace and mortification of the failure, should that have been the termination of the enterprize.* With such a guarantee of perfect safety to the city funds, we

* The low-minded imputations which were preferred against the motives of those who shared in this enterprize were effectually rebutted at the time. It is true that had the Town-Council after our experiment had been brought into a state of safety been disposed to become proprietors of this new church, they would have been expected to pay the price ; but out of this price I know that I would have received from the subscribers all that was necessary for the erection and endowment of parish schools, and the completion in fact of a full Parochial economy in the Cowgate. The subscribers, disappointed in their first undertaking, have commenced a second in the Water of Leith, where, in default of an Edinburgh stipend for the endowment, we can have no return from the seat-rents that will not be absorbed to the maintenance of the clergymen. In the present enterprize there is no return looked for by the subscribers. In the former, there was no return cared for.

anticipated no difficulty ; and more especially as we had to deal with a body of reformers of whom we fondly imagined, that as their great idol was the will, so their great aim would be the well-being of the people. Yet these very rulers did interpose their veto upon the occasion. That system of collegiate charges against which they flourished, so long as they hoped to inflict discredit on the church, by the exhibition of a contrast between the corruption of its ministers and their own high-sounding patriotism—that system, after the ministers had consented to its abolition, they themselves have quietly and spontaneously recurred to. There is nothing we will venture to affirm in the ecclesiastical administration of their predecessors in office which can match the enormity of this proceeding. In the olden time, the habit and character of which we have no wish to recall, they moved quietly and continuously onward in the stream of things as they are, and never dreamed of change or improvement. But these men in the broad day-light of their own blazoned achievements, do revert to the very corruption which themselves had denounced. It ceased to be a grievance in their eyes, so soon as it ceased to be a topic of reproach or invective against the clergy ; and so, of their own accord, do they continue to appoint these collegiate ministers as heretofore. The very last exercise of their patronage in this way was the appointment of a colleague to a minister whose congregation they report as consisting of fifty-six hearers, and whose unlet sittings amount to 519. This was their method of replacing a vacancy,—by giving a second minister to such a congregation, rather than by giving a minister to the plebeian families of the Cowgate, who might there have at this moment been working singly, and with all his might amongst them. But this, it would appear, did not suit

their purpose which some how or other is better served by the exhibition of two established ministers for fifty-six hearers, than of one established minister placed in the midst of such facilities as a rightly conducted establishment alone can secure, and doing the proper work of an establishment which is to reclaim and christianize the common people. Such a spectacle would have been gall and wormwood to certain members of the Town-Council of Edinburgh; and infinitely more delightful to them than the return of the working classes to piety and good order, more especially if the established church is to have any hand in it, is their own return of unlet sittings which themselves have manufactured, and of which themselves and their predecessors before them had created all the materials. Would they rather, we ask, that a work so glorious as the Christian education of the great mass of the people, should remain for ever undone than that it should be done by the hated hands of the established clergy? If not, why did they, in the last exertion of their ecclesiastical power, give a second minister to a congregation of 56 hearers, instead of a single minister to the destitute families of 2500 people in the Cowgate? Who made the surrender on that occasion of the best and highest interests of the common people? Surely their wish that the establishment should remain a stigmatised and hated thing must be very strong, that, rather than the removal of any blot or stigma from its brow, they could become the authors of this guilty sacrifice.

23. Before quitting this melancholy history, let me give a specimen or two of the reasonings for and against a parochial church in the Cowgate. The endless objection of unlet sittings was urged then by the Magistrates even as it is now by the Voluntaries, and as I hope shortly to evince, with as little of the strength and

substance, though with the same show of argument by both. Let the Old Greyfriars' church be filled, ere we proceed to another erection in the eastern part of its parish, was the plausible cry,—to meet which I gave in the following paper, to be read at the deliberations of the Council Board, and which I now present entire to the reader, because a reasoning when directed to some particular instance is often more effective than the same reasoning when propounded in general terms. My object was to shew that the number of unlet seats in the church of the Old Greyfriars was no reason against the erection of a new church for the benefit of a locality in its parish, where I had clearly ascertained that there were a thousand grown-up people, who had not taken sittings in any place of worship whatever.

“The number of *unlet* seats is no criterion for the number of *unoccupied* seats,—it being quite certain that a very great many seats are occupied without being paid for, as is most decisively made out by the fact that the number of communicants in certain of the churches, considerably exceeds the number of recorded and rent-paying sitters.

“And, again, these unlet and low-rented seats, are, as was naturally to be looked for, the worst in the whole church; and many of them so placed that the minister can either not be seen, or not be heard from them.

“But at present I avail myself of neither of these considerations, however pertinent or powerful they might be, in reply to the number of unlet sittings, when alleged in argument against the efficiency or usefulness of the establishment in general. It is when brought forward as an argument against the special measure of a new church and parish in the Cowgate, that we have properly to do with it; and we trust to make it palpa-

ble, that even were the statistics of Mr. Maclaren admitted in their full extent, and without any alleviation whatever, instead of operating against the proposed erection, they make strongly in its favour.

“ Under the present system, there are three distinct causes for these unlet sittings in the existing churches, none of which can be pleaded in opposition to the measure of a new church, if in the new church none of them will be permitted to operate ; nay, what is more, all of them can be pleaded in favour of the measure, if these causes are not only to be removed, but to be reversed, or, in other words, if the present adverse causes are not only to be done away, but wholly opposite causes and opposite influences are to be substituted in their place, justifying therefore the expectation of a wholly opposite result.

“ The first cause of the present unlet sittings, and more especially when they are sittings of a low rent, is that generally where the minister is least acceptable, and, consequently, the least efficient for the purpose of forming a parochial congregation, there the seat-rents are lowest. No wonder that the lowest rented sittings should be the least run upon, if there obtain an almost invariable conjunction between low-rented seats and unacceptable ministers. In the Cowgate church, it is proposed to establish a conjunction diametrically opposite to this—that is, the conjunction of low-rented seats, with the most acceptable and efficient minister that the Church of Scotland will afford.

“ The second cause of the present low-rented sittings being so little in demand is, that they are the worst in the church, and a great many of them quite valueless. In the proposed Cowgate church, this cause would also be reversed. A low seat-rent will be universal ; and the families of the working classes, instead of being consigned, like so many paupers, to the outskirts and

extreme places of the congregation, will one and all of them be respectably accommodated, will be diffused over the whole body of the church, and form the great mass and staple of those who assemble in it.

“ But the third cause is far the most important of the three, and in its moral bearings is of inestimable weight and importance. Under the present system, the ministers, from having to do with general congregations, and from the multitude and variety of their other duties, are well-nigh dissevered from their parishes; and if a clergyman be not in circumstances for both regularly visiting and regularly preaching to the people of his own parish, the non-attendance of that people on the minister is quite unavoidable. The minister of a church in the Cowgate will come to it on the distinct understanding, that his parish is the great, we hope the only theatre of his week-day services; that for the very purpose of augmenting his influence within his assigned territory, the people who live in it are to be privileged with a right of preference for the sittings of his church; and that his distinct business is, by operating upon them in their own houses day after day, with all kind and Christian attentions, to reclaim them from those habits of Sabbath profanation into which the great majority of the common people have fallen.

“ The three causes now in operation, and which account for the existing non-attendance, will thus be done away, and opposite causes, or causes acting in an opposite direction, will be substituted in their room. It is an aphorism in philosophy, that the same causes produce the same effects. And very nearly akin to, if not identical with this, is the proposition, that from contrary causes contrary effects may be anticipated.”

24. The only further information that we shall now

give on the subject of this proposal, is, that it was rejected by the Town-Council, on the recommendation of a committee who drew up an adverse report, the perusal of which I found to be very instructive. There is one paragraph in it pregnant with information, as leading us at once to perceive how utterly impossible it were, for the most Christian and efficient presbytery on earth, to administer aright for the ecclesiastical good of the city, so long as the magistrates shall have the power of imposing what seat-rents they may on the different churches. The two bodies, in fact, pull in directions altogether opposite; and never shall we attain to a soundly prosperous condition, so long as the moral and Christian objects of the presbytery shall remain in their present state of conflict and contrariety with the monied objects of the corporation. The following is the extract referred to.

“If it were proposed for adoption as a principle applicable to all the city churches, that the seat-rents should be upon a scale so low as, in a fully occupied church, would merely pay the interest of the money laid out in the building of it, and defraying the expense of repairs and other contingent charges, there would be no hesitation in saying it ought not to be agreed to.”

25. The councillor of a northern burgh has avowed openly, that he did not want the Church of Scotland to be reformed, but to be destroyed; and that, therefore, the more corrupt our establishment was, it would be all the more accordant with his purposes and wishes. I will not affirm that this is the sentiment of Mr. Adam Black, though it be in perfect keeping with a saying which he quoted at the Council-Board, and without disapprobation at the time, “that the Church of Scotland had damned more souls than it had saved.” Still I am not able to vindicate the practical course that he

has taken for the fulfilment of the object that his heart is set upon, and for which the situation to which he has been preferred by his fellow-citizens, has given him peculiar advantages. His reproachful observation respecting the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, is, that it is of no further use than that of supplying sermons to ladies and gentlemen. They are he and his coadjutors in office who have reduced it to this; and, whether *de jure* or *de facto*, with them is still lodged the power of keeping it at this. At another time, he denounced the project of extending the benefits of our city establishment to the common people as an idle theory; and this it ever will be, so long as he and his colleagues shall stand up like a wall of brass, armed with the power of making it impracticable. But the Scotch are a shrewd and intelligent people, and they will be no longer at a loss to perceive on what party the burden of this obloquy ought to be laid; and, whether or not the inefficiency of our church in Edinburgh be the result of a deep and malignant policy on the part of its adversaries, with the virtual falsehood superadded of its being represented as the fruit of an ecclesiastical corruption, when, in fact, either to the craft or the tyranny of our city rulers is it altogether owing—they will at least see, that the maligned and misrepresented clergy of the metropolis are innocent of it all. We fondly hope, indeed, that not one individual of the corporation, however unwittingly he may have been betrayed into such measures as are hurtful to the reputation of our establishment and subversive of its usefulness, is so lost to principle and honour, as deliberately to have framed and adopted them in the spirit of an infernal or Machiavelian policy. This charge we most willingly abandon; but there is another for which we can find no apology, and no palliation. They have

emitted from their Council-Chamber, what in truth is the report of their own dishonour, but which most perniciously tells at the present crisis to the dishonour of that church, which they, for the enrichment of their own treasury, have done their uttermost to pervert and paralyze. A copy of that document has, I understand, been deposited with every member of the British Legislature ; and it is now, if I may judge from my own correspondence, in busy circulation through all the parishes of Scotland. The emissaries of mischief have, within these few weeks, been most actively at work with it—whether employed by some of their own members or not, I have not the means of knowing. The baleful opposition of our Magistrates to the Christian education of the common people in Edinburgh, with all its consequent and accumulated mischief to the ecclesiastical state of our city, is now converted into an instrument for carrying the like mischief over the whole length and breadth of the land. And an enterprise having no other object than that of furnishing the lessons of the gospel to every neglected locality in our town, and every unprovided hamlet in our country parishes, has been loaded with the disgrace of that wretched mal-administration, under which the cruellest enemies of our church have done all they could to weaken the establishment, and now feel themselves on vantage ground for effecting their purposes to destroy it.

26. But I must now hurry onward to a conclusion,—yet before altogether quitting the subject, I would fain address a few sentences to the people of Scotland. The power of delusion has been busily at work amongst you, within these few weeks ; and one of its mightiest engines, I have been made to understand, has been this document of unlet sittings issued from the Council-

Chamber of Edinburgh, and sent forth in thousands and tens of thousands throughout all the corners of our land. There is another such engine, I have heard, equally mischievous, the statement of a Central Board of Voluntaries having the same object, to defeat the proposed extension of our Church—the design of which extension is neither to enrich clergymen, nor to undermine dissenters, but purely to rescue the unprovided multitudes of our increasing population from the consequences of that destitution and neglect under which they labour. The latter performance will meet its deserts in proper time. But, meanwhile, you will be able to interpret aright those widely circulated papers drawn up and offered to public view under the sanction of our city corporation. They complain of the number of the unlet seats. You will no longer wonder, when told that, one with another, they exact, overhead, no less than 13s. 3d. for each individual occupancy. It is true, as I am speaking of an average, they have many sittings lower than this, for the many they have as much higher; and a few considerably lower; but these when unlet, so absolutely valueless, as to be altogether unworthy of being occupied, or at least unworthy of being paid for. For occupied they are, and that to a great extent, beyond what they are paid for—insomuch, that we will venture to affirm of the thirteen churches in Edinburgh, that there are not thirteen continuous places of worship in all Scotland, whether of the Establishment or the Dissent, which, on the whole, are better filled, and this too, in spite of the heavy prices to which attendance upon the city churches of the metropolis is subjected. Nor is this difficult to understand. There is no town in Scotland, where, within the last fifteen years, there has been a series of better appointments, comprehending a number of clergymen who will fully

match with the *elite* of any establishment or denomination in Christendom. The truth is, the Magistrates of Edinburgh know well, that, without the best men possible, their miserable system could not work at all; nor would they be able to realize one-third of their enormous seat-rent on any other terms than that of looking out, in the event of every vacancy, for the very ablest ministers whom Scotland can afford. We confidently appeal to their former parishes on this subject,—to the people of Yester, who remember Mr. Wilkie; to the people of Sprouston, who remember Mr. Sym; to the people of Glasgow, who remember Dr. Muir and Mr. Marshall; to the people of Kinfauns, who remember Dr. Gordon; to the people of Guthrie, who remember Mr. Bruce; to the people of Swinton, who remember Mr. Hunter; to the people of Greenock, who remember Mr. Cunningham; to the people of Stenton, who remember Mr. Grey; to the people of Bonhill, who remember Mr. Candlish; and, lastly, for, with the power to coin and to circulate such representations, the dead are as little safe as the living, we appeal to the people of the Grampian parish, Glenisla, in whose most hallowed remembrance the saintly and apostolic Mr. Martin still retains the place which his virtues and his unwearied services had earned amongst them;—we appeal to the men of one and all of these parishes, whether, in their consciences, they could ascribe the unlet sittings, that have been so paraded over the whole length and breadth of our land, to the powerlessness of the Edinburgh ecclesiastical labourers, or to the inherent, though before unexplained vices of the Edinburgh ecclesiastical system. These ministers have, each of them, been lured from their former comfortable homes, where they were surrounded by the respect and love of their parishioners; and

many is the rough and adverse element which, whether from the misguided inhabitants of the city, or from the violence and vulgarity of its public functionaries, they have had to contend with. On the one hand, exposed to starvation by the non-payment, which men in high places have most disgracefully countenanced, of that which forms the all they have for the subsistence of their families; on the other, insulted and abused by these very men, because of the non-payment of that which goes, by a process of unlawful merchandise, to the supply of their city treasury. In other words, they must not only acquiesce, without a murmur, in the loss of all that is withheld from themselves; but they must submit to be vilified in every quarter of the kingdom, unless, through their means, the Magistrates of Edinburgh shall be able to exact the uttermost farthing of their monstrous impositions on the hearers of the Established Church. Yet let me no longer speak of the injustice done to the Edinburgh clergy, while an injustice still more grievous in the eye of every philanthropist and patriot remains unredressed,—the injustice done by the Magistrates of Edinburgh to their own population. They refused a low-rented church to the families of the Cowgate; and this for the virtually expressed reason among others, that the monopoly price which they have affixed to the sittings of the other churches was in danger of being broken down by it. Driven from this field of benevolent enterprize, the men whose highest ambition was to be the moral benefactors of the working-classes in society, transferred their operations to the suburb population of the village of the Water of Leith, where they have been nobly received and encouraged by the families. By this movement, no doubt, we forfeited the advantage of an Edinburgh stipend, but rejoiced in the imagination, that, at least, we

were safe from the opposition of the Edinburgh Magistrates. The sum raised for the erection of the village church is about L.1500 ;—the free-will offering of men who have no other object than that the people there should be gathered into one parochial family, and enjoy the constant attentions of a Christian minister, who should live as a friend and a father in the midst of them. But to consummate the plan, something more than a church is indispensable. The maintenance of the clergyman must be provided for from some other source than from seat-rents higher than the people can afford ; and it was to obtain this, that a petition, subscribed by no less than 618 of this small but interesting locality, was sent to the Legislature in order to have some small pittance from Government for the lowering of their rents, and which would serve them instead of that Edinburgh stipend, that might have achieved the same benefit of cheap sittings for the people of the Cowgate. I would not have dwelt with such particularity on this one instance, were it not an example and a prototype for several hundreds of similar instances in Scotland. We hope to obtain the requisite churches by the subscription of benevolent individuals. But the object will be made utterly abortive, if the maintenance of the clergyman shall be altogether thrown on the seat-rents ; and it is to lessen and lighten these that we want some small provision to be made from another quarter than from the means of the people themselves. This is the single object of all our petitions ; and from whatever parties opposition to it might have been expected, we at least, after we had retired from their territory, thought ourselves secure against any disturbance by the rulers of Edinburgh. But that malignant genius which presides over their counsels, and under whose baleful influence their city has become a moral desert, has broken

forth, it would appear, beyond their own limits, and is now working adversely against every attempt that is being made in the country to provide a Christian ministry, under whose care, and under whose culture, we might be enabled to reclaim all the dry and deserted places of our land. People of Scotland! many are the deluded thousands amongst you who know not what ye are doing,—working against the best and highest interests of the humbler classes in society, and weakening the hands of those who have not another wish than to raise both the character and comfort of the poor man and of the labourer. But the effervescence will at length clear away; and after the mock-patriotism of these our modern reformers has made full demonstration of its hollowness and its heartlessness, the scales will fall from your eyes, and you will come to see and understand who the real friends of the common people are.

While engaged in the composition of this pamphlet, I, by a fortunate coincidence, received the following letter from a person then altogether unknown to me, and which on reading, I could not fail to observe how seasonably, how providentially, it had come into my hands. It is from a citizen in the Old Town, confirming and illustrating, by the unvarnished tale of his own personal hardships, the mischief of the Ecclesiastical System in Edinburgh far better than I can do by any elaborate demonstration of it. I cannot withhold any part of it from the reader, but will present it to him entire; feeling as I do, that the simple statement, given in the words of a plain but respectable workman, is of more worth, and more weight, than a thousand arguments.

Edinburgh, April 6, 1835.

REV. SIR,—I have just read a pamphlet bearing your name, on “Churches and Chapels,” and from the concern you shew for that large portion of the community, “the handicraft,” I feel persuaded that you will not take it amiss to be addressed by one of them, as I wish to tender my thanks to you for thereby furnishing me, and others of the same class, with arguments in defence of the Establishment, when assailed, as we often are, by those who differ from us. As it is my lot to have daily intercourse with many in the same grade of life with myself, you will at once see how important it is, when attacked, to be prepared to shew that our ground is not just so untenable as they would have it. Yet, pleased as I am with your pamphlet, I am truly sorry to say, that your arguments are in a great measure neutralized by the fact that the seat-rents, so far from being low, are very high, and thus the precious blessings of Christ’s kingdom, viz. “The poor have the gospel preached to them,” have been in a great measure torn from them. Even the well-disposed poor handicraftsman, born in, nurtured by, and attached to the church, has been driven from it, and forced to seek for spiritual food elsewhere, at a price within the compass of his means. You must be well informed on this subject already; still, I think, that the following statement of facts as regards myself, may place this much-lamented matter in a still stronger point of view. About thirty years ago, I formed a connexion with a family who had been members of, and had several sittings in, the New North Church, for I think nearly half a century; and a short time after I also joined the church, then under the charge of the good old minister, David Dickson. When he died, Mr. Grey was appointed to the church; a great demand for seats was anticipated, and the church was

enlarged to meet this. When Mr. Grey came, we had four sittings at three shillings each. On the following term, when we went to the Cess-office to retake our seats, judge of our surprise when told they were now to be twelve shillings each. We had no previous intimation of this most unreasonable advance in the seat-rents, and it fairly put us to a stand. We thought of leaving the church, but we liked Mr. Grey, and was loath to leave the church; and having put off till the time allowed was nearly expired, we even submitted and paid three pounds, for we now took five seats; and be it noted, our seat was the third from the door, and therefore ought to have been spared, or at least some mitigation of the rise allowed. But many poor people had seats near us, and not a few old widows, who had a hard struggle to scrape a living, and to whom the very walls of the church were dear, from long-cherished family and other associations of forty or fifty years, but alas, they had no alternative but to pay or leave the kirk. Deep and loud were the lamentations when compelled to choose the latter, but all was of no avail; our civic rulers acted upon the worldly maxim, viz. every thing is worth what it will bring in the market, and they found plenty of customers for the seats, high as they were. But mark the consequence;—the parish kirk, without any great stretch of metaphor, was virtually blotted out of the parish. The plebeian portion of the congregation, or parishioners, it mattered not which, had thus their sacred patrimony filched from them by their patrician neighbours—brethren they were not—and left to go to what place of worship they pleased, or to no place at all for any thing those cared who were invested with power. No one amongst them, as far as I know, with his heart in the right place, stood up and asked in council, What is to become of the poor who cannot pay

these high rents? Much akin to this was the desecration of the outer court of the temple, in the days of our Lord when on earth, the place allotted for the worship of the Gentiles, but then chiefly, if not wholly, occupied by the money-changers, dealers in cattle, &c., which was conducted with such fraud and exactions from strangers as to procure for them, from Him who knew the hearts of all men, the epithet of thieves or robbers. Yet we do not read of any one pleading the cause of the poor Gentiles on being then so basely supplanted by such characters; and if they had, the reply probably would have been, Poh, they are only Gentiles. I need not tell you, Sir, about the deceitfulness of the human heart, nor how much of the old man lurks in our fallen nature. An eminent writer says, "I can compare it to nothing more fitly than the sea; it is sometimes as smooth as a looking-glass, but then you may be sure it is a calm; a small breeze will ruffle the surface, and in proportion as the wind rises so does the sea." Oh how it raves and rages in a moment! So sometimes the heart is smooth and quiet if it be a calm season with us; if all be well with us and about us, the heart promises mighty fair, but there frequently comes a blast of temptation, a slight, an insult, a wrong done us, and all is in an uproar at once. Sometimes a mere trifle will make the heart swell, and foam, and toss up its billows even to the clouds as it were; and is it to be wondered, Sir, that an occasion like this should tempt many to leave the church in disgust and join the dissenters? It has been said, "It is in the body politic, as in architecture, ruin is the more fatal if it begin at the bottom." I leave you to draw the inference. A year or two after the rise of the seat-rents, we wished to take the whole pew, as we occupied five seats, and the pew held six, a man having left the remaining seat whose wife sat in another

place of the church ; but, on applying, were told we must petition for it. I spoke to a gentleman who had recently left the Town-Council ; he said he would speak to one of the Council who knew me, to support my petition, but did not think it would be of any use, as there might be a hundred petitions for twenty seats which would never be opened, so that it mattered not what the claims might be, the seats would be given to favourites ; and sure enough so it was, the seat was let to a person living at the back of the New Town. But notwithstanding all this, we still adhere to the church, for I learnt that it was rather the misfortune than the fault of the church, as the ministers had no hand in these unholy doings of raising the seat-rents. I may mention that, on removing to our present place of meeting, another sixpence was laid upon the seats, but this was what they called *equallizing* them—a very *consolatory* reason to a working man ; this was taken off last term. In stating these particulars to you, Sir, I would be glad to know whether there be any possibility of the ministers obtaining a voice in fixing the seat-rents, as this great bar to filling the churches must be evident to them all, for it has been observed, “A majority of the Town Council may happen at some future period to be unfriendly to the Establishment, and so raise the price still higher, and drive away many more.”

I hope you will excuse me for occupying so much of your time. But I have taken the liberty, because I know you have great influence in the community, and the cause of the working man at heart, and will not fail to exert it for their benefit. I remain, Rev. Sir, with much respect, your very obedient servant,

STEWART BELL.

No. 6, Milne's Court, Bow-Head.

I could not have desired a clearer or more impressive statement than the one given in this letter of the Edinburgh ecclesiastical system, and the havoc made by its mischievous working on the character and habits of the general community. While we cannot but admire the strength and tenacity of principle wherewith, though at the heavy expense of L.3 a-year, the writer of this communication and the members of his family still cling to the tabernacles of their fathers, we need no longer wonder, the mystery is quite dissipated, that only 727 individuals out of above 28,000, being the population of the Old Town, should have seats taken in all the Established Churches of the city. But while we cannot sufficiently deplore this great moral calamity, what shall we think of the recklessness of its authors who would lay upon the heads of others, beside themselves, the burden and disgrace of that sore evil which their own hands have inflicted?

I cannot adequately express the satisfaction and the delight which I felt when, on inquiring into the situation of Mr. Stewart Bell, I made the discovery that he was an operative journeyman in the shop of a silver-plate worker. Edinburgh will never be restored to a right ecclesiastical condition, till its establishment is restored to its proper and legitimate functions by each parish church becoming what it originally was, the rightful inheritance and common good of its own parish families. Would that the great majority of all our Old Town congregations consisted of the operatives and journeymen of Edinburgh, each in his own well-filled family pew. The ladies and gentlemen of the New Town can shift for themselves.*

* For the process by which to reach this blissful consummation;

we again refer to the "Right Ecclesiastical Economy of a Large Town."

We trust that we have not incurred even the appearance of disrespect to the affluent and existing seat-holders of our Edinburgh churches. It is true that in as far as they are extra-parochial, they occupy their places by usurpation. The usurpation, however, is not their deed but that of the Magistrates, who in the first instance have assumed the church room as their property, and in the second, compel the most extravagant prices for the use of it. When we say of our affluent seat-holders that they can shift for themselves, we mean that the same wealth which is competent to the payment of their high seat-rents is competent to the erection and endowment of churches for their most ample and honourable accommodation. The annual sum of L.7000 a-year from seat-rents, which now enters into the coffers of the city corporation, were, if not so appropriated, a sufficient guarantee for the provision of ten new churches, with all their annual expenses, including the maintenance of the clergymen.

APPENDIX.

(A.) § 1.

OBJECTION TO THE BUILDING OF ADDITIONAL CHURCHES, ON THE GROUND THAT THE EXISTING CHURCHES ARE NOT ALL FILLED.

IN consequence of this objection having been lately reiterated in high quarters, it has been thought proper to reprint a correspondence on the subject of it, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of the 17th of February.

To the Editor of the Edinburgh Advertiser.

February 12th, 1835.

DEAR SIR,—The objection to our Assembly Scheme for Church Accommodation, grounded on the number of unoccupied seats in our existing churches, is one so generally felt, and which meets us so frequently, and in every possible form, that it were well if the proper reply to it could be so given as to be thoroughly understood. This, perhaps, might be done more effectively by means of a brief and familiar letter, written on the impulse of an unlooked-for occasion, than by any more formal and elaborate exposition of the argument in question. May I therefore request an insertion in your columns of the following correspondence. I shall be happy if it be the means not only of doing away the objection, but of suggesting to the friends of our cause how desirable a preparation it is, for the success of every new erection, that there should be the previous working of

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a Home Missionary among the families of the locality for which it is destined. Without a living agency of this sort, the enterprise, in many instances, will fail, and the mortifying spectacle of many desolate or half-filled pews would convince us that something more than the mere architecture of new places of worship is indispensable to restore a habit of church-going among our people. I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

THOS. CHALMERS.

To the Rev. DR. CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, 15th January 1835.

SIR,—The Incorporation (in the nature of a Friendly Society) of which I am the Treasurer, are possessed of a couple of pews in the Canongate Old Church, affording seventeen sittings, and as you have taken a lively interest in measures for the increase of Church Accommodation, I take the liberty of addressing this note to you.

The sittings in question have lately afforded to the Society's funds very little indeed, but as you and your coadjutors may not be aware that accommodation to that extent may be had, I venture to offer them on very moderate terms, I may say lower than can be had in any other church in town, Established or Dissenting. Requesting the favour of a reply, I beg to subscribe myself your most obedient humble servant,

To this Letter the following Reply was sent:—

Jan. 17, 1835.

SIR,—You seem to have misconceived the object of our Committee, and also the means of its accomplishment.

We do not look for a larger attendance upon religious worship from the mere increased supply of Church Accommodation. There must also be an increased demand for it,

which last requisite can only be brought about by a more thorough and efficient pastoral superintendence.

On this principle, I should expect that if the Canongate were cut down into three or four parishes, all its three or four churches would be better filled, by the efforts of zealous clergymen, having each a field of management which he could overtake, than your present one church with its unwieldy parish ever will, or ever can be, in its present circumstances.

This may, perhaps, appear a paradox to you, but I shall give you an experimental verification of it. The Water of Leith district in the West Kirk parish, has a population of from 1400 to 1500. Yet only 150 of them have sittings anywhere, and 67 of them are in the Establishment. Along with this there are empty or half empty pews in the West Kirk; but had we waited till these were filled, or till the two ministers of 70,000 people had, by their assiduous week-day attentions in the Water of Leith, infused a taste and a desire for church-going among its families, we should have waited for ever. But we took another way of it. We set a parish missionary amongst them, who can give his whole time to the work, and who, by his unwearied ministrations among the sick, and the dying, and the ignorant, and the young, has created such a demand for Sabbath attendance, that his preaching-hall, which holds 300, is filled to an overflow; and we feel encouraged to build a church (to be set about immediately,) in the confident hope that many hundreds, who till now have been living in heathenism, will be reclaimed to the good old habits of their forefathers.

It was on this principle that I should have raised a church in the Cowgate had the Magistrates let me. But they seem disposed to wait till the Old and New Greyfriars churches are filled, in which case also they may have to wait for ever, and the Cowgate remain as great a moral desert as before.

I am happy to inform you, that there are at least forty such enterprises going on at present in Scotland as the one in the Water of Leith, a prospectus of which I take the liberty of sending to you. It is possible that the offer could have been made in several instances where the additional places of worship are now building, of pews unoccupied or

pews unlet,—such an offer, in fact, as you, sir, have made to me and to my coadjutors. I am very glad that if such an offer has been made, it has not arrested them in their undertakings, any more than the proposition which you have submitted to us will arrest us in ours.

Permit me to say, that I am not sure what interpretation I should put upon your letter, and whether it proceeds from a friendly or unfriendly hand. On either supposition it is our duty to move through good report or bad report; and if what I have now written shall have the effect either of confirming a friend or conciliating an adversary, I shall feel that the trouble of this communication has not been thrown away. I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

(Signed) THOMAS CHALMERS.

P. S.—Dr. Chalmers has met so often with the misconception which seems to have originated Mr. ———'s letter, that he proposes to insert both that letter and his own reply to it, in an early newspaper. And he begs to know whether Mr. ——— will permit the publication of his name.*

(B.) § 8.

In the various propositions which have been made for a new-modelling of the ecclesiastical revenues in the city of Edinburgh, the real use of an endowment has been seldom if ever recognised. Nothing could tend more powerfully to defeat all the purposes of an establishment than to blend together the produce of the annuity-tax with the produce of the seat-rents for the maintenance of the clergyman, leaving at the same time an arbitrary power in any quarter to raise the seat-rents at pleasure, and more especially if this power be lodged in the hands of a party interested in bringing down the fund for endowment as far as possible. Indeed the proposal at one time was to take from the Edinburgh ministers their old and stable endowments altogether, and give them the produce of seat-rents in place. In other

* There has been no reply to this communication.

words, there was to be wrested from them that fund which has been their own for many generations; and by virtue of which each of the city clergymen might, but for the arbitrary proceedings of the Town-Council, become the minister indeed, and without any burden on the lower orders, of all his parish families. And they would make over in exchange that other fund which themselves have unlawfully extorted from the community, the produce of their own hated toll-gates—a fund charged with all sorts of odium and heart-burning, and with the still more fearful evil of banishing from the churches of the Establishment the general population of Edinburgh. By acts and actings of their own they have smitten all our city churches with the impotency of the voluntary system; and they at one time wished to perpetuate this impotency, and to make it irreversible by an act of parliament. It is no reply to this that they did not mean absolutely to annihilate the fund by endowment; and that they only meant to lessen it by compounding therewith the produce of seat-rents, so as out of both to make a living for the clergyman. The effect, it will be perceived, is the same. The object of this whole movement would have been to bring the annuity as far down as possible, and this can only be effected by bringing the seat-rents as far up as possible. In either way the churches in Edinburgh would have been bereft of the peculiar virtue which belongs to an establishment. A cheap Christian education to the lower orders, we mean cheap to the lower orders themselves, would have become a thing unknown and a thing impossible. The people would have been made over to the tender mercies of the voluntary system, and with the effect of driving almost all of the lowest grades in society to the outfields of heathenism—not to be recovered thence by their parish clergymen, all whose attentions would have to be given to their own general congregations, on whom then would be all their dependance. The goodly arrangements of the parochial system would have been conclusively broken up, and an evil begun by the government of the city, would have been consummated and made everlasting by the government of the state.

It should be observed, that there is one method of com-

pounding a seat-rent with an endowment for the maintenance of the clergyman, which is not liable to this exception. If a maximum of seat-rents be fixed for the greater part of the church, and the remaining part be left to fetch its market-price, let that maximum be low enough, and then, consistently with a cheap church accommodation for the common people, might there still a considerable revenue be raised from the seat-rents, either to help the endowment, or for other ecclesiastical and educational objects in the parish. In towns we should not object if two-thirds of the sittings were let at an average not exceeding 3s. each, and with a strict preference to the parishioners, although the remaining third were exposed first to parochial and then to general competition at such prices as they could bring. This is what we have proposed should be done with our new churches, so that the income of the clergymen would, like that of the schoolmaster, arise partly from endowment, and partly from the payments of those who attend him.

So much for the method of paying clergy out of the seat-rents. There was another form of it proposed to the Presbytery of Edinburgh by the Town-Council, a good many months ago, and to which I must confess a very strong disinclination, that they should give up their endowment, and be paid out of the common good of the city—a peculiar phrase, but not unknown to the people of towns in Scotland, being the treasure or treasury of the corporation, denominated the common good, for what reason, I know not; because, rather than a centre of generous and wide-spread emanation, the great part which it performs, as far as I can perceive, is that of an absorbent, ravenous and devouring as the grave, which is never satisfied. One instance, I happen to know well, of a certain house and garden which belonged to the professor of divinity, for which, had it continued at his own disposal, he might have realized several hundred pounds a-year; but in lieu of this, they gave him, in the name of house-rent, L.36, and the remainder I have searched for, but searched in vain, among the depositories and hidden depths of that great whirlpool the common good. Of late, several of our university salaries have come within the vortex of this most tremendous suction, and shot from their spheres. Indeed, it was

much about a year ago, that expecting my own salary as usual to be at its Whitsunday perigee, I stretched forth my hand for it, but was told that it too had gone forth with the rest of them upon their circulation, and it remains uncertain whether, as the period comes round again, they will come within our reach ; or after, perhaps, a few revolutions, we shall lose sight of them, for ever ingulfed in the eddy of the common good. The question of the Theological fees has been more than once agitated within the walls of the General Assembly. Should it ever be revived, there is one element of the deliberation, which I trust will not be forgotten ; and that is the sufferings of the professor in the highest and most honourable of all capacities, the capacity of a martyr to the common good. But, to pass on from mere illustrations to the case in point, it is not very many years ago since the City Corporation took the whole produce of the annuity to themselves, and then made over but a fraction of it to the city clergy ; and this act of taking one part in of what belongs to the ministers for their own behoof, they call paying the other part out of the common good. But all these I hold to be pigmy instances compared with the gigantic mischief of the one given in the text ; and by which, for the sake of a revenue from seat-rents, the common people of our city have been driven to the wilds of paganism, and the best interests of thousands of families have been thrown into one mighty hecatomb on the altar of this common good. My friends of the corporation, and I have experienced both kindness from many and courteousness from all, will understand, that while under the painful necessity of telling all that truth and the justice of the cause require of me, it is without the slightest mixture either of ill-will or disrespect individually to any of them. The truth is, that when, from the principles of the question, I turn me to the persons who have to do with it, I try to relieve myself by all sorts of good-natured imaginations—such as the necessities of their position, or their peculiar notions on the subject of civic patriotism ; or what perhaps is likeliest of all, they may be the disciples, along with some other estimable men, of the utilitarian system of morals—the leading principle of which we know is the suppression or sacrifice of all private and particular in-

terests to the common good. But without theorizing any more on the views of our opponents, I trust that enough has been said for the practical vindication of our own; and that the public will not find us in an error, because we are not willing that the clergy of Edinburgh should be paid out of the general city fund, and still less willing to exchange with their corporation the produce of the annuity for the produce of seat-rents; or, in other words, are not willing that the clergy henceforth shall be supported from the proceeds of a most pernicious extortion, and give up that fund which robs no man, which no man can withhold from them without himself incurring the guilt of robbery, and all for the evident purpose too, or at least with the certain effect, that the corporation might virtually take it to themselves.

After all, the most desirable reformation of any is, that a similar commutation should be effected of the annuity-tax in Edinburgh, that has been proposed for the tithes of England and Ireland. It should be altogether transferred from occupiers to owners, so that instead of the irritations and the heart-burnings which have so distempered the relation that should obtain between the city clergymen and the great mass of the inhabitants, the payment of stipend might be as much a matter of certainty and quietness as the payment of a feu-duty or ground-rent.

(C.) § 9.

The following is an extract from the legal opinion of Mr. (now Lord) Moncreiff, given in 1823.

“ I am clearly of opinion that the Magistrates have no right to levy seat-rents for the increase of the general revenues of the city, or for any purpose, except for the support of the Ecclesiastical Establishment itself.”

at 20th February 1835,

335,

responding date.

27/6		30/		40/		1834-35.		1833-34.		of 1834-35.	
Let.	Unlet.	Let.	Unlet.	Let.	Unlet.	Total.		Total.		Sittings Let.	
						Let.	Unlet.	Let.	Unlet.	Increase.	Decrease.
..	..	61	13	..	..	789	467	754	488	35	
..	..	..	..	..	..	1150	52	1148	96	2	
..	..	..	12	..	..	870	355	825	452	45	
..	..	..	..	..	..	309	420	311	391	..	2
..	..	..	..	..	..	315	428	475	206	..	160
..	..	..	..	..	..	378	625	360	541	18	
..	..	..	..	..	..	409	417	122	578	287	
..	..	..	..	..	..	420	578	404	587	16	
..	..	37	39	..	..	444	529	453	590	..	9
618	15	65	2	71	1	1547	55	1465	169	82	
..	..	..	..	..	..	1038	524	959	633	79	
73	9	72	12	94	2	1574	40	1631	38	..	57
691	..	235	..	165	..	9243	..	8907	..	564	228
..	24	..	78	..	3	..	449	..	4769	..	
..	..	..	..	..	..	56	519	..	..	56	
691	..	235	..	165	..	9299	..	8907	..	620	
..	24	..	78	..	3	..	5009	..	4769	..	228
Deduct Decrease as above, - - -										228	
Total Increase of Sittings Let 1834-35,										392	

(D.)

Annotation on the annexed Return.

(1.) Tolbooth Church.—Minister, the Reverend Mr. MARSHALL, from whom I have received the following statements:—

“ If one were to judge of the extent to which sittings are taken from the appearance of the congregation on Sabbath, the conclusion arrived at would be, that there are no unlet sittings at all, the church being always well filled, and often crowded ; but at the same time I have no doubt whatever of the accuracy of the returns of the Town-Council.

“ There are certainly between forty and fifty sittings of such an inferior and inconvenient description, that even the lowest price would not tempt any one to take them.”

N. B. It will be observed from the return that there are only fifty-three unlet sittings in this church at a rent below six shillings.

“ There are about 900 communicants.” N. B. This exceeds the number of let sittings, but at the same time strikingly demonstrates the excess of the seat-occupiers over the seat-renters. Generally, almost universally, the number of communicants is far short of the number of sitters. It makes a very large proportion, should the communicants be three-fourths of the congregation. At this rate, Mr. Marshall's congregation should consist of 1200. The total number of sittings, according to the return, is 1256.

“ The causes of the unlet sittings are, first, the extravagant price which is demanded for them; and, second, the disadvantageous situation in which many of them are placed. The prices of the sittings are in general far beyond the capabilities of the great bulk, not only of the parishioners, but also of those living in the vicinity of the church ; and it is not to be expected that people will come for church-accommodation to the heart of the Old Town, when they have acceptable ministers and most comfortable churches in their own neighbourhood. And that this cause has operated powerfully in making many sittings remain unlet, I conceive the following facts to be demonstrative. When my congregation met in Albany Street Chapel, and when the seat-rents were moderate, *every sitting was taken*. When we

removed to our present place of worship, and when it was expected that the prices would continue reasonable, *nearly eleven hundred sittings were taken*, but on the succeeding Martinmas, when the great rise took place, the number of sittings taken *immediately fell to eight hundred and twenty-two*, many families were driven from the church, and many who regularly paid seat-rents in Albany Street Chapel, have, since that time, occupied sittings without paying for them. At present, too, the unlet sittings are almost exclusively confined to high-rented seats; and those low ones which are placed behind pillars. About a fortnight ago, nineteen of the parishioners who previously had no seats in any place of worship took sittings; but the greater number of these declared that they would rather continue occupying seats where they could find them than pay for sittings so disadvantageously situated as they found those to be which were to be had at such prices as they could afford, and to prevent them going away disappointed, money had to be given them to enable them to take higher-priced sittings. Since that time, several more of the parishioners in the same circumstances, have intimated their wish to have sittings for which they can afford to pay, and where they can see the minister, but there are none such for them.

“These facts, I conceive, sufficiently explain the reason why so many sittings are unlet. But at the same time, I cannot conclude this statement, without observing that it does appear to me the friends of the Church have allowed themselves to be too much startled by the oft-repeated announcement of unlet seats. The question, are sittings let or unlet, is one with which I conceive the Town-Council *alone* have to do. It relates to the return in *money* which churches yield, an object with which a church establishment has nothing to do. The question, are the churches occupied?—well-filled, or ill-filled?—that appears to me to be the only one with which we have to do, and with regard to my own church, I have no hesitation in saying that it answers the real purpose of a religious establishment, with its unlet sittings, better than it would do if these sittings were taken at the prices which the Town-Council have put upon them. If they were taken, it would not, it could not be by parishioners, by persons in the

humbler classes in society, but it would be by individuals from a distance, in comparatively affluent circumstances who would, in this manner, supplant those who are now occupying them, and who occupy without paying for them, because they cannot afford the price which is put upon them."

These last observations of Mr. Marshall's are particularly important, but they should have been made public a great deal sooner; and that not to satisfy those friends of the church who may have "been too much startled by the oft-repeated announcement of unlet seats," but to silence those enemies of the Church who have made a most unfair handle of it. It is not to be told what mischief has been done by the tame and tacit acquiescence of the ministers of Edinburgh in all the obloquy which they have had to endure.

(2.) Little Church.—Minister, the Reverend Mr. BRUCE. I learn from him That he has eight hundred and fifty communicants, which is less than three-fourths of his let sittings, and, therefore, much less than three-fourths of his inconveniently crowded congregation. The number of unlet sittings is fifty-two, of which only six are below the rent of six shillings. It will be observed, that the number of unlet sittings in 1833-34, is represented as 96, and is now reduced to fifty-two, though there be only an increase by two in the let sittings. This arises from the church being found to contain forty-two sittings fewer than were represented in the report of the preceding year.

It is almost unnecessary to dwell on the adverse circumstances under which this great and splendid congregation has been formed. But it will at least prove, how, under a clergyman of inferior attractions, a very small congregation would have been the inevitable result, a circumstance that would have told to the prejudice of the Edinburgh ministers, though altogether due to the vices of the Edinburgh system. In reply to my question, Whether he could state any circumstances that would be of importance in explaining the alleged number of unlet sittings, Mr. Bruce alleges, that "besides the seat-rents, many of which are higher than in any other church in that part of the town, the church

itself is most awkwardly situated for the attendance of a congregation. It is so detached from the parish in point of locality, and so well known as the *Methodist Chapel*, that it is morally impossible to get the bulk of the parishioners to regard it as *their parish church*. The opening of several churches around it, and between it and the New Town, while the seat-rents in the best parts of the church are kept as high as ever, and the rest are very little reduced, makes it equally unfavourable for the attendance of a *gathered congregation*."

(3.) High Church.—Ministers, the Very Rev. Principal BAIRD, and the Rev. Dr. GORDON. On the subject of the unlet sittings in this church, I have been favoured by the Kirk-session with a copy of their satisfactory and triumphant report. The unlet sittings are stated by the Magistrates at three hundred and fifty-five. But it appears that the number of sittings in which the occupants can have no view of the pulpit, and in which the hearing is more or less defective, is two hundred and twenty, which, taken from three hundred and fifty-five, leaves one hundred and thirty-five. But this is not all. These sittings are "contained in pews, the whole or part of which pews are out of the view of the pulpit, these sittings being all to a certain extent depreciated in value by the circumstance of a portion of the sittings in them being beyond the range of the pulpit, so that the persons taking sittings in those pews run the risk of being obliged to occupy the particular sittings in them which are behind the pillars. They found the number of pews in this situation to be fifty-seven, viz. thirty-six in the lower part of the church, and twenty-one in the gallery; and the number of sittings in the said fifty-seven pews to be four hundred and seventy-nine." "In addition, therefore, to the whole unexceptionable seats in the church being taken, there are taken one hundred and twenty-four seats liable to the disadvantages alluded to." It is further reported, "that seats are often let for more persons than they can contain; and when one finds himself excluded from a seat for which he has paid, it is calculated to make him decline to pay for a sitting another year." Is it owing to this that the number

of sittings in 1833-34, is stated at fifty-two more than the number of sittings 1834-35?

The following explanation accounts well for the non-letting of the low-rented seats, and at the same time shews how much the occupation of the seats must exceed the renting of them. "There is an apparent anomaly which it may be proper to explain in regard to the seats let at 3s., none of which have been taken, although they are better seats than many of those for which larger rents are paid. This is chiefly owing to the circumstance that these seats have by usage come to be considered free, and persons who deem it a mark of respectability to have a seat of their own, prefer taking it in a part of the church, which is not only less liable to intrusion, but which is less liable to the imputation of being a pauper district."

One of the questions put by the Town-Council, "Whether the session could suggest any mode of letting the unlet seats," is thus most properly answered by the committee of the kirk-session. "It appears to your committee, that the most effectual, and, at the same time, the least expensive mode that could be adopted, would be to cut out the sittings and desks in those parts of the pews which are obscured by the pillars. But, while your committee mention this as a likely means of improving the letting of the remaining sittings in these pews, they by no means think it desirable that it should be adopted, as it would diminish the accommodation afforded by the church to the amount of 220 sittings, which sittings, although very defective, are still, in point of fact, generally occupied, although, in some instances, without being paid for." This answer is altogether worthy of men whose object is, as it ought to be, not the letting of the seats, but the occupation of them.)

The following are the remaining extracts which bear most importantly upon the question:—"There is one remedy which your committee would suggest as very obvious and likely to be efficacious, if the Magistrates can be induced to apply it, viz. the lowering of the rents, and especially the affording an increased number of sittings at such rents as may bring them within the reach of the humbler classes." "There seems to be no impropriety in informing the Town-

Council, that, if their statement be correct, that only 870 of the sittings are taken, you have reason to believe a number of seats considerably greater than that is occupied by persons in connexion with the Establishment, as the regular communicants in the church are about 750." *N.B.* Such a number of communicants implies, at the very least, a congregation of upwards of 1000, which harmonizes with the report of a friend, who told me, a few days ago, that he had been hearing Dr. Gordon on an ordinary Sabbath, and that the church was full.

There is no part of this admirable report which I more sympathize with than that, in which, from motives of high and honourable delicacy, they decline to inform the Magistrates of the description of persons by whom the unlet seats in the church are regularly occupied.

(4.) Tron Church.—Ministers, the Rev. Dr. BRUNTON and the Rev. Mr. HUNTER. In this church the attendance is upon the increase. The appearance of the congregation does not indicate such a number of unlet seats as is stated in the document of the Town-Council. Indeed, the number of communicants even exceeds considerably the number of let seats; and, therefore, the congregation should greatly exceed that number. The true explanation of the reason why the seat-renting falls so greatly short of the occupation is, that the rents are greatly beyond the reach of the parishioners, the greater proportion of whom belong to the poorer classes of society. On the loose system of general and floating congregations, every church in the Old Town, which wont to be filled from the New Town, or from the south side of the city, is liable to suffer greatly in its attendance by every new church built in these quarters. The accident which befel this church, by fire, in 1824, and the subsequent proposal to remove it, increased this effect.

(5.) College Church.—The Rev. Mr. CUNNINGHAM, Minister. This is the famous instance of an alleged decrease in the number of let sittings, amounting to no less than 160. The truth is, that the Magistrates, in the mean time, had greatly increased the seat-rents; and the great majority, not aware of

this circumstance till the day of payment, fell off from being seat-payers, whether they remain seat-occupiers or not. Certain it is, if they do not continue to fill their old sittings, others do it for them; for, I am credibly informed, that, "in the College Church, there is no very sensible difference between the ordinary attendance this year and last. The ordinary attendance, certainly, has not diminished; and if there be any difference, it has rather increased:" and the appearance of the congregation in no way indicates such a number of unlet sittings as the return exhibits. "The unlet seats in the return include 36 sittings, which have always been regarded as the property of Trinity Hospital; for which seat-rents never were asked till Martinmas last, and which are well occupied by the inmates of the Hospital, although no rent is paid for them, the right of the Council to exact it being denied." "The number of sittings, where the minister cannot be seen, is about 120, or nearly one-sixth of the whole accommodation; and, besides, there are about 40 more, where he is imperfectly heard, from the echo; making, in all, a number greater than the number of unlet sittings under 6s.; while, it should be carefully observed, that the poor are more influenced by, and more dependant upon, the external circumstances of seeing fully, and hearing easily, than the educated."

I am further enabled, by Mr. Cunningham, to state as follows:—"In regard to the unlet sittings, the chief things to be kept in mind are these, that the appointment of the present incumbent found the church almost literally empty; that there is a great difference between preserving a congregation and making one; that a congregation can be formed by abstraction from other churches only, when there is a very great superiority of popular attractions on the part of the minister, or else some peculiarly favourable combination of circumstances; that in regard to the College Church, every adventitious circumstance as to locality, comfort, and accommodation, is most unfavourable; that, besides about 100 persons attending a preaching station, some poor persons from the parish have been induced to attend the church, though the process of forming a congregation in that way must necessarily be a slow one."

(6.) Lady Yester's.—Rev. Dr. LEE, Minister till January last. Of this most interesting case, I am enabled, by the kindness of my reverend friend, to state the following particulars:—"The rent of the furthest back seats in the gallery, till within these few years, was 4s. each sitting. At that rate, they were fully let, and fully occupied. When they were lowered to 3s., they continued to be let as before; and to me they seemed to be almost invariably filled. Indeed, they were the best filled seats in the church during the whole period of my incumbency." "It is proper for me to state, that immediately before the reduction of the rents, a most unfavourable circumstance had occurred, which tended to diminish the attendance in Lady Yester's Church. In November 1828, at the very time when the annual intimation for letting the seats was made, a great alarm was occasioned one afternoon, by the falling of a large portion of plaster, with a loud noise from the ceiling under the back gallery, during the last prayer; and this not only frightened many people at the time, but made it necessary to shut up the church for a temporary repair. This occurrence took place a few months subsequent to the fatal accident at Kirkcaldy. People had a strong impression of the instability of the gallery; and, when next summer, the Town-Council ordered a thorough repair, it was found, that the apprehension of insecurity was too well founded, as the whole lobby behind the gallery was supported by beams almost consumed with dry rot, and other parts of the original structure were found to have been deficient. A very substantial repair was effected; but it occupied so long a period, that the usual time of letting the seats was at hand before the church was re-opened. While the church was shut up, far more than double the time anticipated, many persons accommodated themselves elsewhere. A number of families in the New Town took seats in St. Stephen's, which had been opened for divine service about a month after the alarm to which I have referred. Others went to Mr. Marshall's congregation, which had then a temporary place of worship in Albany Street. Others to Dr. Gordon's, then in Nicolson's Square. And while so many attractions presented themselves to those who lived at a little distance, the ma-

terials out of which congregations are generally composed were not multiplying, but diminishing, in the immediate vicinity. The parish itself has been progressively becoming poorer; and a large proportion of the population now consists of Irish Roman Catholics, who have not the faculty of peculiarly attaching the natives of this country to the spots which they select for their abode. But I have not fully represented the effect of shutting up the church for repair. In reality, this disadvantage, through great mismanagement, had occurred three times during the first four years of my incumbency, and might have been avoided by a complete repair during the vacancy. In August 1825, the roof was taken off, and was to have been renewed in five weeks. It was not replaced completely for three months; and the new plaster which was put on in November was not dry till the end of January 1826,—two months after the annual period of letting the seats. Here were six months vacancy, and the church left more uncomfortable than before. The drenching of the walls occasioned the falling of the plaster in November 1828; and there was thus a second shutting up, for the purpose of propping and patching some parts of the gallery which were suspected to be defective. In summer, there was thus a shutting up, which exposed infirmities greater than had been anticipated, and which, consequently, proved unexpectedly tedious, so as to disperse a considerable part of the congregation, as has often been experienced elsewhere in similar circumstances.”

“ I may state, that one considerable portion of the gallery is the property of the Marquis of Tweeddale, whose ancestors furnished the means of building the church. His Lordship does not prevent any one from occupying them, and these free seats I uniformly observed to be particularly well filled, and for the most part by the same people. A number of persons unconnected with the University also sat generally in the students’ gallery, particularly in summer. I rather think, that wherever a considerable proportion of seats may be had without payment, people will be more backward to pay than if there were no free seats.”

I now add, that the number of communicants is about 600 implying a congregation considerably greater than double the

number of the let sittings. There is no wish, however, to disguise the fact, that while of late there has been a large and increasing proportion of attendance on the part of the poor, there has been a considerable decline of hearers from among the richer and higher classes. I know that the erudite and accomplished scholar of whom I now write, will not be offended, though, for the purpose of explanation, I should advert to the severe domestic calamities which for years have weighed upon him, by which the regularity and wonted fulness, or even force of his ministrations may for the time have been somewhat impaired. This is fitted to have a most unfavourable effect in every place where, under a system of general, as distinct from parochial congregations, there is a number of light and locomotive hearers, who are constantly upon the wing, and who in their movements from one church to another, are far more influenced by the secondary merits of a sermon, than either by the unction of its sentiments or its deep and evangelical piety. Nothing but the parochial system will ever place the stability of our town congregations beyond the reach of accident,—that system which binds the families of a parish, by its many kindly influences and associations, to their own parish church. Those very afflictions which disable a minister for the amount and vigour of his former services, and disperse all his more loosely related hearers away from him, would just have the effect of endearing him the more to the families of his well-cultivated parish, and gather them all the more closely and numerous around him.

(7.) Old Greyfriars.—The Rev. Dr. ANDERSON and the Rev. Mr. SYM, Ministers. This church, though not half let, is represented by one who hears Mr. Sym as altogether full, being another of the many proofs, that the number of payments in the cess-books forms no criterion of the number of sitters in the congregation.

(8.) New Greyfriars.—Rev. Mr. WILKIE, Minister. In the absence of Mr. Wilkie I have received the following very explicit and satisfactory statements from the kirk-session.

“ There has been an increase of attendance from 1833–4

to 1834-5. The number of *let* sittings is greater by 16, and this moreover in spite of the unwarrantable rise in the price of the sittings at 5s. 6d.

“The appearance of the congregation by no means indicates such a number of unlet seats as is stated in the returns of the Town-Council. The number of seats let is 420. In the galleries only 49 are let, and the number actually occupied is about 240. The average number of the congregation is about 700, exclusive of the two hospitals, amounting (boys, masters, and servants) to about 270. For the hospitals the Town receive L.50 per annum of rent, but this sum is not placed to the credit of the church in the printed returns.

“There are 168 sittings totally obscured from a view of the pulpit by the large pillars, and these are scattered over pews capable of holding 394 persons. Of these 394 sittings only 57 are let.

“There are nearly 600 communicants,”—a good set-off to the 420 let seats.

“The character of the parish is one chief cause of the unlet sittings. It is a very poor parish, and divided into two classes. One class is too poor to pay a high price, but will not take a bad sitting even at a reduced price; while the other class is *absolutely poor*, and unable to pay seat-rent at all, and yet there are no free sittings except in the passages.

“In November last the Town-Council raised the price of the 5s. 6d. sittings to 7s., and the consequence is, that several individuals reduced the number of their sittings, although they still occupy as many as before.

(9.) St. Andrew's Church.—Rev. Dr. GRANT and Rev. Dr. RITCHIE, Ministers. I have not received any report of this church. It may be mentioned, that in this age of unceremonious attacks, the defence must often be alike unceremonious. When I state of any clergymen that they have been upwards, I believe, of thirty years ministers in the city of Edinburgh, beside being above 70 years of age, I trust that the ministers of St. Andrew's, as well as that talented minister of rich and various endowments, the minister of the Old Church, will forgive my allusion to these circumstances. For so strong is my

conviction of the utter precariousness of that tie by which a general congregation is kept together, that I never would count on its being upheld even to one half of its original extent during the whole of a lengthened incumbency. There are I believe six ministers of the eighteen in Edinburgh who are above sixty years old, whom I have not so much as named in the text, because in the single circumstance of their age I can find a sufficient explanation of any decay or deficiency which may be alleged to have taken place in their congregations. In no large city where the parochial system is broken up can it be otherwise. Did each church gather its hearers from its own parish it would not be so. But under the present system, every new minister becomes a formidable competitor to the old ones. Did he enlarge his congregation by making larger drafts from his parish than heretofore, this were real and substantial prosperity, and at this rate each clergyman might indefinitely recruit his church without coming into conflict with any of his brethren,—instead of which, every accession that he now makes to his own flock is at the expense of previous congregations. It is quite impossible, in these circumstances, that any general congregation can stand its ground amid the suspended, or at length in the course of years, the enfeebled services of its clergyman, whereas an attached and well acquainted parochial congregation would cling to their minister, and keep by him to the last. If the present system continue, the most popular of our existing clergy must lay their account with the treatment of their predecessors. They too will at length be outdone by more youthful and vigorous competitors than themselves, and their days of desertion and infirmity may yet be coming, when the contemptuous and coarse-minded shall insult over them.

(10.) St. George's.—The Rev. Mr. CANDLISH, Minister. The following are the only particulars which require to be stated of this very large and flourishing congregation.

There is one small circumstance which serves to mark the anxiety of the Magistrates to make as large a harvest as possible of the enormous seat-rents that are laid upon the hearers. “Nine sittings formerly allotted to the beadles and

cleaners of the church for the accommodation of their families have been withdrawn! These, of course, swell the number of seats returned unlet."

There are upwards of 1000 communicants.

"The pews (many of them, it is believed, 64), were let for more than they could hold; 32 have been enlarged in dimensions so as to hold the number formerly allotted; 32 have been let for one less than formerly. Total sittings let and unlet in 1833-34, 1634,—1834-35, 1602."

The total number of unlet sittings is 55. That this is greatly overpassed by actual occupation must be quite palpable to every hearer in St. George's. The following are authentic specimens of this. "At least 13 families in the parish can be specified by name who sit in St. George's but have no sittings taken,—families containing 26 members in all above 12 years of age, some of them communicants, and the families of several members have only one sitting among them all.—Cause, the high rent of sittings."

(11.) St. Mary's.—The Rev. HENRY GREY, Minister. The following is the extremely satisfactory report of this prosperous congregation, notwithstanding the 524 unlet sittings of the church in which they assemble. In the first place, there has been a sensible increase of attendance from 1833-4 to 1834-5, and as to the unlet sittings, I have received this intimation;—"The number of seats stated to be unlet in St. Mary's, surprised both myself and the Session. The appearance of the congregation might lead one to suppose the church *generally* let; for, in fact, the pews wholly or partially unlet, are usually as well filled as those completely let."

The number of communicants is 846.

This church presents another strong example of the strange practice of letting pews for more sittings than they can contain. "The pews were reckoned to hold more, and in some cases were let for more, than they could accommodate; a family consisting of seven persons, to secure their comfort would pay for eight. Still the pews, in some parts of the church, are too small for the numbers assigned to them, though at last term the whole number of sittings to be let was reduced by thirty. If these thirty sit-

tings, now extinguished, be held to have been *unoccupied but paid for before*, then the real increase in the number of persons now occupying seats for which they pay, instead of seventy-nine, must be reckoned 109. According to the Town-Council returns for 1833-4 and 1834-5, the number of *unlet* seats is this year *reduced* by 109."

"The high seat-rents are the great cause of the unlet sittings. In St Mary's there are 202 sittings at rents of under 8s. for the public generally, or 6s. for parishioners. Thus the poorest classes are necessarily excluded.

(12.) St. Stephen's.—Rev. Dr. MUIR, Minister. By the kindness of Dr. Muir, and at the instance of his kirk-session, I am enabled to favour the public with the following particulars.

"None of the sittings enumerated in the town's books are gratuitous; and of course the free sittings in St. Stephen's church are *not* reckoned among those that are unlet. Those free sittings are got in this way. Forms are placed to the wall above and below, which accommodate *one hundred and sixty* persons. They are occupied every Sabbath by parishioners who cannot pay seat-rents.

"The number of communicants is nearly 1200.

"Some of the pews in 1833-4, were let for more than they could contain, and at Martinmas last, it appears that *fifty-five* sittings in the whole were taken off on that account, so that the total number of sittings in the church (which was *sixteen hundred and thirty-one*,) was reduced to *fifteen hundred and seventy four*. In the Town-Council returns of let and unlet seats, dated 20th Feb. 1835, it is stated, that in Feb. 1834, the total number of unlet seats was thirty-eight, and in Feb. last the total number is given at forty—thus making a difference of two only. Of these *forty*, there have been *six* let since. Perhaps the greater part of the remainder may yet be taken for the present year, as was the case last year, for it appears by the Cess Office books, that there were just *two sittings* unlet at the beginning of August.

"Two reasons at least, why the *thirty-four* sittings now to let, (which are all in the gallery) are not taken, the kirk-session conceive to be these:—that persons with a family, who would be disposed to take the greater part of a pew,

feel reluctant to have single sittings scattered here and there; and besides, in November last, it was intimated to the beadle by the clerks at the Cess Office, that (with the exception of *six or seven*) no seats were to be had.

“On the subject of high rents, the fact may be stated, that on the day of seat-letting at last term, there was a great demand for *cheap seats*, and several persons went away disappointed on being informed that all the seats *under 15s. were let*. There are *only 119 sittings at 8s., 24 at 10s., and 32 at 12s.*; the great proportion ranging from 20s. to 40s.”

In regard to these two magnificent congregations of St. Stephen's and St. George's, built up chiefly of the patrician classes, we confess, that in our estimation, they would rank infinitely higher in point of moral importance, beside exhibiting a more tasteful and interesting spectacle, if, formed on the system of parochial seat-letting, they had presented us with more of that beautiful gradation from the highest to the lowest rank which is general in our country parishes. This I might well say without offence to either of the clergymen, who take a most benevolent interest in the Christianity of the poor, and are unwearied in their parochial labours.

(13.) Old Church.—Rev. Dr. MACKNIGHT, and, (within these few months,) Dr. LEE, Ministers.

It is astonishing that any remnant of a congregation should have survived the annihilating processes to which this one has been subjected,—unchurched for several years, and at length, after being accommodated in the High School, on the Calton Hill, re-assembled in an aisle of St. Giles'. The small fragment which kept together, have taken, it would appear, fifty-six sittings; and nothing could more effectually answer the purpose of fastening upon our Establishment a degrading mockery, than that of appointing two ministers for such a handful of hearers. The right appointment, in the circumstances, would have been, that of an assistant and successor to Dr. Macknight, who, with the spirit of a devoted missionary, might have gone forth upon the families of his poor parish, and with the advantage, not of 10s. sittings, but of 3s. sittings to dispose among them, and that not for a small portion, but for two-thirds of the whole

accommodation. And in order that the parochial system may have fair play, the result of such a process, zealously and vigorously conducted, for at least ten years, ought to be waited for.

This last example is, with great appropriateness, made to conclude the Council Committee's report, which, with whatever design it may have been framed, has at least been circulated with the design of injuring and disgracing our Establishment all over the land.

The conclusion from the whole is, that the seat-rents ought to be generally and indefinitely lowered; that the preference for the sittings should be reserved in favour of parishioners; and that the ministers, instead of being thrown, as now, upon the general public, should each betake himself to his own home walk, where, by digging in their respective parishes, they will be sure to find ample materials for recruiting and keeping up their congregations to an overflow,—obtaining not only a full, but a fixed and stable attendance from the families of their own proper and territorial vineyard.

EDINBURGH :

Printed by A. BALFOUR & Co. Niddry Street.

Chalmers, Thomas,

On the evils, which the established church in Edinburgh has already suffered, and suffers still in virtue of the seat-letting being in the hands of the magistrates with remarks on the unjust and injurious tendency of a late document, published by their authority on the subject of the

Edinburgh 1835

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